

# PALESTINIAN MUSIC IN EXILE **Voices** of **Resistance**



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# **PALESTINIAN MUSIC IN EXILE Voices of Resistance**

The American University in Cairo Press  
Cairo New York

Louis  
Brehony



This electronic edition published in 2023 by  
The American University in Cairo Press  
113 Sharia Kasr el Aini, Cairo, Egypt  
420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 1644, New York, NY 10070  
www.aucpress.com

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Hardback ISBN 978 1 649 03304 8  
WebPDF ISBN 978 1 649 03306 2  
eISBN 978 1 649 03305 5

Version 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Brehony, Louis, 1983– author.

Title: Palestinian music in exile : voices of resistance / Louis Brehony.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023014097 | ISBN 9781649033048 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781649033055 (epub) | ISBN 9781649033062 (adobe pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Palestinian Arabs—Music—History and criticism. |

Palestinian Arabs—Music—Political aspects. | Music—Middle

East—History and criticism. | Music—Egypt—History and criticism. |

Expatriate musicians—Middle East. | Expatriate musicians—Egypt.

Classification: LCC ML3754.9 .B74 2023 | DDC 780.89/9274—dc23/eng/20230501

1 2 3 4 5 27 26 25 24 23

Designed by Westchester Publishing Services

For Bobbi and Layth



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# Preface

A world was swept into the eleven-day confrontation waged across Palestine from May 10 to 21, 2021, with global mobilizations in defense of Palestinian rights and in solidarity with a new intifada, or uprising, that would continue after the “ceasefire.” Gaza, densely populated by displaced Palestinians and the frontline of decades of struggle, bore the brunt, as Israeli bombs rained down indiscriminately, killing 256, including sixty-six children, destroying residential blocks, and exacerbating the social deprivation of blockade. But beating back the onslaught and delaying the imminent colonial land grab of Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem, the protest movement and armed resistance of the colonized was momentarily united, throwing the complicit Palestinian Authority (PA) under Mahmoud Abbas into irrelevance, as urban and rural centers took matters into their own hands. Further afield, Palestinian refugees took to the streets to play their part, demanding not to be forgotten, in Lebanon, Syria, and in Jordan, where descendants of the displaced in '48 and '67 forced their return over the West Bank border. In Istanbul, Gaza-born rappers led chants of “strike, strike Tel Aviv!” outside the Israeli embassy.

Palestinians in Gaza, al-Khalil, Jenin, and other locations known for their fighting spirit were joined by those with nominal Israeli citizenship, casting aside the myth that the national question is settled for '48 Palestinians, as new generations of activists and performers emerged within the borders claimed by Israel since the Nakba of 1948. During days of anger, repression, and elation, liberated zones in Haifa, Yafa, Umm al-Fahm, and Nazareth brought new and old songs of resistance to the streets. In the mass strike of May 18, a young protest band in Ramallah, featuring



multiple *ouds*, rearranged the socialist anthem “Nizilna ‘al-shawari’” (We went down to the streets) as the red *kuffieh* was worn by the mass who sang to the land as “Janna” (Paradise) in Haifa. Continuing the movement months later, youths led street protests in Akka, repeating choruses of folklorist Abu Arab’s revolutionary anthem of return “Hadi ya bahr” (Be still, oh ocean), while children painted pictures of the Naji al-Ali cartoon character Handala, the steadfast child.

Music became an established theme of the rebellion in occupied Jerusalem, where *oud* player Canaan Ghouel performed in front of Damascus Gate. Admitting that her “blood was aflame,” vocalist Rola Azar came back from Germany to join leftist contingents in her native Nazareth and, having lived through the past three Israeli wars on Gaza, Reem Anbar sent home from Britain an instrumental *oud* version of Lebanese composer Marcel Khalife’s “Amur bi-ismik” (I walk with your name). Rapper Daboor rhymed about the bullets “ululating in Sheikh Jarrah” and, writing and singing “Sumud” (steadfastness), classically trained Nai Barghouti lyricized Palestine as “mother of song,” whose people remained “steadfast despite the siege.” In Gaza, singer Ramy Okasha released a well-produced ode to Jerusalem, “Sawt ahli” (Voice of my people), presenting imagery of armed resistance alongside the beauty of the city, and channeling the popular chant that “with soul, with blood,” al-Aqsa would be liberated. Near Umm al-Fahm, young fellahi songwriter Kokym sang a new “Palestinian liberation wedding chant” in dedication to the Palestinian flag, combining ukulele chords with traditionalized melody.

In the events on the ground in 2021, musicians, artists, and other performers were hurled into the waves of Zionist repression and revolutionary resistance. Unprotected by the privileges attached to statehood or being a music industry’s token success story, singers and players were part of the masses. Fadi Washaha, artist son of *buzuq* player Rami, succumbed on June 2 to the Israeli bullets fired into his head at a protest two weeks prior. Palestine National Orchestra bassist Mariam Afifi was violently arrested on May 9. Rap group DAM faced military siege in Lydd. In Gaza, over forty cultural institutions were destroyed or damaged during Israel’s aerial destruction, including the Mashariq studio in Ansar, where reality TV vocalist Mohammed Assaf had once recorded.

Over the ruins in Gaza on June 3, *kuffieh*-wearing students of the Edward Said National Conservatory played a *qanun*- and *oud*-led instrumental

arrangement of “Mawtini” (My homeland), based on Ibrahim Touqan’s 1934 poem against the British occupation. In 2018, young refugee bands had sung its lyrics in the debris of the Said al-Mashal theater, obliterated by Israeli bombing a day earlier on August 9, quickly gathering attendees of its music and cultural projects, including now-defunct bands Dawaween (plural of *diwan*) and Awtar al-Shari’ (Strings of the Street). A spontaneous audience joined in with the popular “Muqawama” (Resistance), performed by Lebanese diva Julia Boutros in the wake of the Hizbullah victory over Israel in 2006. They would sing it again in 2021.

Your glory was tainted by humiliation and defeat  
 When the south stood up to resist  
 The history of dignity never sleeps  
 It writes of our land stories of heroism.

Once sung to the Lebanese south by Palestinian refugees who had withstood the invasion, the song’s movement to Gaza chartered the frontlines shifting around a kernel. Whatever the overwhelming odds, the displaced, the oppressed, and the downtrodden would sing last.



# Acknowledgments

It feels difficult to locate the starting gate for this project, or to remember when love for the music and involvement in campaigning turned into “serious” study. For myself and others, Britain’s predatory role in the 2003 invasion of Iraq was the spark for becoming active and learning about the Palestinian cause, beginning a process of collective political education. Bob Shepherd and Manchester comrades were particular inspirations, while the *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* editorial board taught many young comrades the discipline of writing and self-criticism.

The University of Salford could not match the institutions appearing higher on the national league tables for resources, but it boasted an open-minded faculty of lecturers who promoted my early research into Palestinian music and Marxist aesthetics; elsewhere, the response may have been the opposite.

Thinking further back, the stellar figure guiding the routes of me and my siblings into arty-farty vocations was Gran, Irish-Mancunian opera-singing matriarch Pauline Brehony, who would have it no other way. She lives on in the music, film, acting, and photography of our “Von Trapp” sibling group, and I struggle for words to describe the creative tenacity of Fiona, Roisin, and Leon.

In 2013, after working in Palestine solidarity organizing for a decade, alongside performing in bands on the British scene, a friend invited me to stay with their family in occupied Jerusalem. Mohammed Assaf had just won *Arab Idol* and I was curious to hear the thoughts of musicians on the ground. Assisted by the warmth and passion of the Ghneim family, who

helped in meeting musicians and shared their own stories, the idea for deeper study solidified. I'd written sporadically on Palestinian music since 2004 but it was time to step things up a notch.

A Europe-based focus for the first few years meant that I began to better understand the significance of the *ghurba* (exile) for Palestinians around the world. Though I had come to refocus on the Arab region, the journeys of Europe-based refugees clearly formed part of a bigger picture, whether it meant imprisonment under hostile immigration systems or understanding the demands placed on Palestinian performers to "coexist" or depoliticize in order to get by in the music industry. Similar stories were being played out elsewhere.

Encouragement for developing this research came from Professor Martin Stokes at King's College London, my PhD supervisor from 2014 to 2019, and my work has benefited greatly from his critical support and advice along the way.

I offer the highest praise and gratitude to all of the musicians appearing in this text, along with a broader list whose input has informed the research: Walid Abdalsalam, Tamer Abu Ghazaleh, Reem and Fares Anbar, Majd Antar, Samer Asakli, Huda Asfour, Mohammed Assaf, Rola Azar, Rim Banna, Nai Barghouti, Mustapha Dakhoul, Maysa Daw, Said Fadel, Marcel Ghusain, Ahmed Haddad, Ziad Hbouss, Bahaa Joumaa, Khaled Jubran, Faten Kabha, Reem Kelani, Ahmad Al Khatib, Said and Wissam Murad, Tamer Nafar, Mtanes Nahas, Hamada Nasrallah, Rawan and Mohammad Okasha, Nizar Rohana, Fida' al-Sha'ir, Yara Salahiddeen, Tarek Salhia, George Sawa, Ibrahim Sbehat, Ruba Shamshoum, Saied Silbak, Sol Band, Reem Talhami, George Totari and Kofia band, Umm Ali and Umm Fadi, Basel and Christine Zayed.

I am indebted to a long list of friends, comrades, and contacts, whose support has ranged from deep discussions over food and music to brief but illuminating correspondence, including Kinan Abu Akel, Emile Ashrawi, Sami Abu Shumays, Qusai Alhaj, Khalid Mohamed Ali, Khalid and Wedad El-Ali, Olfat Anbar, Randa Safieh-Angeles, Ali Bahtha, Tarik Beshir, Khaled Barakat and Charlotte Kates at Samidoun, Ramzy Baroud, Issa Boulos, Reime and Ronaya Gedal, Tahrir Hamdi, Haya, Maha, and the Ghneim family, Nafiz Ghneim, Nader Jalal, Leila Khaled, Johnny Faraj, Samir Harb, Asim Ka'abi and Sumoud Saadat, the Kirmiz family, Rima Khcheich, Mohamed Salah Eddine Madiou, Lena Meari, Yousif Qandeel, Nikolaz Quinio at Sumud

Guirab, Gilbert Mansour, Ahmed Mukhtar, Ahmed Ramadan, Akram al-Rayess, Mahdi Saafin, Hussain Sabsaby, Aser al-Saqqa, Hazem Shaheen, Bashar Shammout, and Ourooba Shetewi.

At various stages in the last ten years of research, Arabic support has come from Duaa Ahmed, Reem Anbar, Shadi Daana, Mohammad Daghrah, Mariam al-Hasan, Mo Juhaider, and Lama Mansour. Unless stated otherwise, the translations are my own.

The proposal for this book was realized thanks to the enthusiasm of Anne Routon and Stacy Farenthold at The American University in Cairo Press, along with the editorial team, reviewers, and all of the workers involved in publishing.

I must thank my family, including my juggling, gardening, Palestine flag-adorning mum Jayne Mealing; dad, Damien Brehony, as first guitar teacher and football indoctrinator; the siblings and their loved ones.

Finally and essentially, to Reem, for inspiring and putting up with me in equal measure.



# Key Events

May 1916	Sykes–Picot agreement finalized in secret between Britain and France, carving up territory ruled by the Ottoman Empire following World War I.
November 1917	Balfour Declaration signals Britain’s support for establishing a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. Britain occupies Palestine until 1948.
September 1923	Death of Egyptian composer and revolutionary Sayyid Darwish.
August 1929	British suppression of Palestinian mobilizations in Jerusalem and other cities, including the Buraq rebellion, near al-Aqsa mosque.
June 1930	Execution of Fuad Hijazi, Atta al-Zeer, and Mohammad Khalil Jamjoum by the British regime at Acre prison. Poet Nuh Ibrahim dedicates the song “Min sijn ‘Akka” (From Acre prison) to them.
March–April 1932	Cairo Congress of Arab Music, aiming to standardize and modernize Arab music.
ca. 1934	Ibrahim Touqan composes the poem “Mawtini” (My homeland).
1936–39	Palestinian revolution against Zionism and British imperialism, brutally suppressed by Britain, with over 5,000 Palestinian deaths, collective punishment, expulsion, and internment.



1948	Nakba and establishment of the state of Israel (May), with over 750,000 Palestinians expelled from their homes. Hundreds of Palestinians massacred, including at Deir Yassin (April) and al-Dawayima (October) by Zionist militias.
October 1956	Egypt attacked by Israel in plans laid by Britain and France, after nationalization of the Suez Canal by the government of Gamal Abdel Nasser.
June 1964	Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) initiated by the Arab League.
June 1967	Israel wages war on Egypt-led Arab forces; colonizes the West Bank, Gaza, and Sinai. This Naksa (setback) heralds the expulsion of 320,000 Palestinians in 1967 alone, and around 655,000 in the following two decades.
March 1968	Battle of Karameh marks the reemergence of the Palestinian armed struggle, with victory over Israeli forces in the Jordanian town.
September 1970	PLO driven out of Jordan in Black September, resulting in over 4,000 deaths. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) launches a wave of successful plane hijackings. Death of Abdel Nasser.
July 1972	Beirut assassination of Palestinian Marxist and literary figure Ghassan Kanafani with his niece Lamis by Israeli Mossad.
October 1973	Prevalence of US-backed Israel over Egypt and Syria in a war that solidified the occupation.
February 1975	Death of vocalist Umm Kulthum, considered Egypt's fourth pyramid.
March 1976	Land Day: repression of mass strike of '48 Palestinians by Israeli authorities, with mass arrests and injuries, and six killed.

August 1976	Up to 3,000 Palestinians killed by Christian rightists in the massacre of Tel al-Za'tar, Beirut.
1977	Al-Ashiqeen band formed in Damascus.
March 1978	Israel occupies southern Lebanon.
1979	Formation of El-Funoun arts troupe, Ramallah.
December 1981	Israel annexes the Syrian Golan, a move recognized by only the United States.
September 1982	Slaughter of up to 3,500 Palestinians by Israeli-backed Phalange at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, Beirut, after internationally coordinated withdrawal of Palestinian <i>fida'iyyin</i> .
1984	Debut release of "Dukhan al-Barakin" (Smoke of the volcanoes) by the Sabreen band.
August 1987	Assassination of Palestinian cartoonist Naji al-Ali, London.
December 1987	Beginning of the intifada uprising against settler violence, poverty, and political frustration in occupied Palestine.
August 1990	United States and Britain lead war on their former ally Saddam Hussain over Iraq's annexation of Kuwait.
September 1993	Oslo Accords signed by the United States, Israel, and PLO. Edward Said denounces a "Palestinian Versailles," with Israel colonizing swathes of historic Palestine and the issue of refugees indefinitely postponed.
April 1996	Qana massacre as Israel fires shells into a United Nations compound in South Lebanon, killing 106 Lebanese civilians.
May 2000	Defeat of Zionist forces in Lebanon, ending a twenty-two-year occupation.

June 2000	Breakdown of Camp David negotiations, with Israel demanding formal control of East Jerusalem.
September 2000	Al-Aqsa intifada begins, accelerated by the failures of Oslo. Over 4,200 Palestinians are killed in Zionist repression over the next seven years.
March 2003	U.S.- and British-led imperialist invasion of Iraq resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths and chaos across the region.
January 2006	Victory of Hamas in elections to the Palestinian Authority. Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah leadership refuses to cede the West Bank and Israel blockades Gaza.
July 2006	Israeli invasion of Lebanon beaten back by Hizbullah and its allies.
December 2008	Israeli invasion of Gaza in Operation Cast Lead kills over 1,400 Palestinians.
January 2011	Tahrir Square protests begin the Egyptian revolution, bringing down the Mubarak presidency within a month.
June 2013	Victory of Mohammed Assaf in the <i>Arab Idol</i> TV competition.
July 2014	Israeli invasion kills over 2,000 Palestinians in Gaza.
August 2018	Israeli bombing of Gaza destroys the Said al-Mashal theater.
May 2021	Confrontation over Zionist plans to colonize Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem, and Israeli war on Gaza. Protests erupt across historic Palestine.

# Introduction

## Strings of the Street: Resistance Aesthetics of a Nation in Movement

The nightingale will sing and nest above the doorways  
And the dawn of the people will come

–TAWFIQ ZAYYAD, “SARAB” (MIRAGE)

The most important figures in Palestinian music are the Palestinian people. . . . We are far removed from commercial music of the Arab world due to the political situation and our historic struggle.

–RIM BANNA<sup>1</sup>

**D**espite the warnings of politicians and academics, the issue of Palestine is not complicated, complex, or risky. For many who stand with the Palestinians who are fighting for liberation from a racist, colonial regime, a century marked by Zionist oppression, war, and ethnic cleansing have roots in the global system of imperialism to which the Israeli state owes its existence. As novelist and socialist leader Ghassan Kana-fani declared, the resistance struggle is not a cause of Palestinians alone, but for all revolutionaries and oppressed people internationally.<sup>2</sup> Beginning with such assertions does not imply that all expressions of Palestinianhood essentially represent oppositional and national liberationist politics, but, with a now sizable majority of Palestinians living outside of the lands tilled and inhabited by their ancestors before the Nakba, the performance cultures of those in *ghurba* (place of exile) are products of journeys to new times and places. In its exilic traditions, Palestinian music is alive with both rejuvenations and revolutions.

This book sets out to uncover histories of Palestinian musicianship in regions of concentrated refugee presence in relatively close proximity to

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Palestine. Collected over more than ten years of ethnographic research, the stories of musical listening, learning, singing, playing, and organizing are placed center stage, spanning over half a century in divergent locations of displacement. Creative practices are explored as they emerge from unique historic conditions shaped by colonialism, repression, opportunity, and underdevelopment across a region stretching from Kuwait City to Istanbul. There is no location of Palestinian exile that has not produced its own musicians or musical experiences. Some of these are well known in their regions or when the music has traveled, yet celebrity or fame has until recently been anathema to a nation denied real independence. Music carries meanings from its roots, origins and evolution, but beyond this, musical narratives are revealing of collective histories, confrontations, and hopes. Seen as something that can be appropriated by anyone, music becomes a way of being involved in making history.

By homing in on regions formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, this research stands outside of certain trends, including those I research and advocate. First, recent studies of music and diaspora have, in part, reflected the agency and vitality of migrant and refugee narratives “in the belly of the beast,” in Europe and North America;<sup>3</sup> it is a subplot of this study that many of the musicians discussed have ended up in these countries, including in the asylum-seeker jails of Fortress Europe. Second, the campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) on Israel is sometimes construed as globalizing the Palestinian struggle to the extent that resistance on the ground is deemphasized; one English protest chant heard during research for this book claims BDS as the “only one course of action.” As Leila Khaled argues, the boycott is an important tool of political solidarity, but alone “it does not liberate land.”<sup>4</sup>

By extension, resistance in Palestine and in countries of the near *ghurba* continues to be the lifeblood of the national liberation struggle. In the era following the fall of the Soviet Union, wars and sanctions instigated by imperialism have caused vast destruction and untold loss of life beyond Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The context of crisis is global, but it resonates most intensely in lands carved up by imperialists more than a century ago. While the period since 2011 has brought a deluge of studies on oppositional culture—overwhelmingly sidelining discussion of proxy wars and Western blueprints for regime change in Arab lands—Palestine expresses fundamental differences with compromised notions

of “rebellion,” for its concreteness, its anti-imperialist content, and for its long-standing spirit of cultural revolution.

Refocusing Palestinian music studies on an area broadly referred to as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) carries its own arguments and implications that are developed in more detail below. At least in the post-Nakba and post-1967 periods referred to in the book’s early chapters, it could be argued that Palestine’s best-known band (al-Ashiqeen, Syria), oud player (Rawhi al-Khammash, Iraq), and political singer (Abu Arab, Lebanon/Syria) had developed their artistry outside of Palestine. Other regional musicians also gained huge popularity among Palestinians, notably Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers (Lebanon), Umm Kulthum (Egypt) and, later, Marcel Khalife, Ahmad Kaabour, and Julia Boutros (all Lebanon). The same eras also witnessed the vinyl, radio, and cassette-tape transmission of a seemingly unprecedented array of nonregional sounds, with Billie Holiday, The Beatles, Pink Floyd, and Janis Joplin all making their way into Palestinian listening habits. This transmission took place alongside shifting patterns of outside influence among countries still feeling the birth pangs of formal independence.

Where Palestinians growing up in 1960s and 1970s Kuwait or Syria developed tastes for U.S. pop, owing to class position, assimilation, or sociopolitical context, some refugees of a similar age in Gaza remembered the mid-1990s as their first exposure to “English music.” Whether Gaza’s political steadfastness was mirrored in the tastes of its majority refugee population for non-Westernized, that is, Palestinian and Arab, musics may find answers in the course of this study. But this process was vastly uneven and differential, which brings us to one assertion of this text, that Palestine is itself a site of exile. Gaza is among the densest regions of displacement, which partly explains its vivacity as a center of resistance as well as the bloodiness of Israeli repression. At the same time, regions of historic Palestine partitioned into the Green Lines of the Zionist state have faced massive internal displacement; those whose villages were attacked and destroyed during the Nakba, and who endure disproportionate poverty, form the backbone of resurgent Palestinian identity. This book’s musical narratives contrast experiences, while placing stories of the internally displaced alongside those exiled from Palestine.

The voices featured in this book’s chapters represent a cross-section of Palestinian musicianship, coming from different generations, class

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backgrounds, genders, refugee statuses, and family histories in historic Palestine. Most but not all have aspired to be performing musicians, and each tells a particular story of growing up around music, highlighting particular spaces found or denied. Reflecting on the importance of this set of narratives, I am drawn back to the victory of Palestinian refugee singer Mohammed Assaf in Arab Idol 2013, which sparked scenes of jubilation in Palestine and among communities worldwide.<sup>5</sup> Until this point, Palestinians' closest relation to personified fame had been Yasser Arafat and his iconic black and white *kuffieh*. Assaf was a first: here was a refugee-camp boy who had made it big.

Assaf was subsequently tied to a ten-year contract with Saudi company Platinum Records, winning both admirers and detractors while adopting the production values of Gulf pop, and performing mainly for elite concertgoers. But coming from Khan Younis, Gaza's "castle of revolution,"<sup>6</sup> Assaf's childhood stories were not dissimilar to others I met. During our interview in 2014, he spoke of listening to al-Ashiqeen and of learning about Palestinian history through song. He had sung on the streets of the camp, performing at weddings, *watani* (nationalist) events, protests, and anywhere else he could find a microphone.

Though Egypt-based bandleader Tamer Abu Ghazaleh works with underground label Mostakell, none of the other musicians featuring prominently in this book have recording contracts. Musicians form part of the Palestinian masses, disenfranchised by statelessness and carrying stories which speak to this experience. Although some have broken through in regional or international markets, the enduringly grassroots nature of Palestinian music speaks to the struggles, frustrations, and dreams of many others navigating the instabilities of the contemporary situation. Like other displaced Palestinians, many of them have taken to the streets in times of social movement. Many of them have sung or played to the protesting crowds. Avoiding a history of the notables brings us closer to the pulse of the people and their voices of resistance.

The musicians in this book have spent significant portions of their lives in regional exile, with some enduring further displacement. Sharing a dedication to Palestinian music and to telling its story from their own perspectives, they stand out for their contrasting aesthetics and uses for music, and for how such approaches were shaped in distinct spaces and periods of upbringing, many of which have fallen outside of academic

focus. The central characters of *Palestinian Music in Exile* draw attention to musical forms both highly stylized and untethered from a particular genre. Together in this work, their contributions offer the chance for analyzing musical transmission, which spans traditional folklore, political song, *tarab* and Arab art musics, jazz, popular, and alternative musics.

### Aesthetics of Revolution

Although many of the stories told in this book spring from individual memories, their recollections of music and exile experience speak to a collective universe where ideas are formed, frequently brought together by hostility and disadvantage in host countries, cramped refugee camps, or momentary spaces. Having a wider view of events and communal organization means understanding how Palestinians grapple with, negotiate, or resist displacement. From an early point in the process, this research raised questions of the role played by music in the social environments of Palestinian exile and about how routes and roadblocks to musical success are impacted by regional and international power structures. What platforms and spaces were offered or denied by local, regional, or international music industries and political regimes? What has been the role of music listening, singing, and the playing of instruments in the camps and cities of Palestinian displacement?

Places of exile, whether internal or external to Palestine, carried their own clues for learning how style, genre, or national tradition are navigated by Palestinian musicians. Every interview, concert, jam session, and social occasion raised further questions: How are musical aesthetics and politics balanced or addressed? Do songs and pieces necessarily convey heritages of Palestine for those displaced from their homeland? Are categories of *sumud* (steadfastness) and resistance still relevant? And can nonvocal, instrumental music really communicate on the same level as poetic song?

When I looked for answers within the narratives, lyrics, anecdotes, performances, and political histories, and wondered whether questions about music would inevitably prove its relative lack of importance, all roads led back to Palestine. Accompanying the Marxist framework developed in this book is the view that the cosmopolitan and multifaceted musicianship of the recent period has roots in historic Palestine, where research has depicted intercommunal, multiethnic social and cultural



## 6 INTRODUCTION

scenes in the centuries before the Nakba.<sup>7</sup> Palestinian social spaces were violently and deliberately disrupted and scattered by the establishment of the Zionist state.<sup>8</sup> A fundamental argument here is that grassroots musical narratives employ steadfastness, resistance, and grassroots critique to challenge and overturn Palestinian oppression in eras of global crisis.

For Joseph Massad, colonialism is simultaneously repressive and productive of a range of cultural expression.<sup>9</sup> Expanding this notion, the theoretical concepts followed in this book take inspiration from the rarely acknowledged contributions to revolutionary Marxism of the novelist and leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) Ghassan Kanafani, leading activist Leila Khaled, and leftist cartoonist Naji al-Ali, all of whom spent lives exiled from Palestine in countries studied in this book. A central notion is that the cultural theories developed by these three—along with Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, György Lukács, and other key thinkers—were grounded in an understanding of imperialism as a particular historic phase impacting on artistic expression and representation. For Kanafani, a pioneer among other Arab radicals, social and aesthetic ideas were allied to an incisive analysis of the Arab world and its relationship to imperialism as a global system, and its impact on lands colonized or brought into imperialist spheres of influence despite nominal independence. Interrogated through the calibers of revolutionary theory wielded by fighters in the struggle for national liberation and social revolution, the locations and histories witnessed by the musicians in this book are contextualized through Marxist understandings of culture and imperialism. This study argues that, under colonial relations and displacement, the reclaiming of public space has gone hand in hand with aesthetic revolution, broadening and traditionalizing the sounds of Palestine, responding to historic crises, and recollectivizing narratives and forms of organization.

Palestinian music is an oral tradition, harking back to poetic song-forms, troubadour wedding singers, and accompaniments to the yarns of the *hakawati* (storyteller) in social gatherings. Songs are powerful modes of poetic transmission and the leading role of women is continually reinscribed in the transmission of Palestinian narratives. Whether through the continuing popularity of Fairuz, for example, or in rearranged, recontextualized versions of material now seen as both “folk” and political, the

many roles of musical poetry studied here include its propensity for carrying history, mediating communal experience, and serving as a form of revolutionary protagonism.

But this book is also about instruments. In times when political fighters were calling for new means to challenge regional and international power structures, the *oud* became a central figure in communal gatherings and in anthems passed around on cassette tapes. The uses of this archetypal string instrument were rethought in Palestinian camps in the revolutionary period after 1967, where young musicians like Ahmad Al Khatib were inducted into the Iraqi school of playing, established in midcentury Baghdad. Others would pick up the Arab *ney* (reed pipe), the electric guitar, or, more surprisingly, the Scottish bagpipes left by British occupying forces a half-century earlier. The waves of conquest and rebellion shaping Palestinian history have brought about a renaissance and redefining of indigenous heritage, sometimes leading it in unexpected directions.

Palestinian musicians refuse to let leaders, governments, and complicit institutions off the hook. Examples of their critical *sumud* narratives target the temporality of Gulf exile, monarchist camp sieges, the prisons of occupation, and cramped exile spaces, as well as those presiding over the Oslo “peace” process. In times of historic strife, cultural movement and political criticism are driven from below. The oral histories presented in this book show that music and politics always coexist and frequently coalesce. Exiled musicians are seen here as powerful actors, offering resistance critiques of existing conditions, and presenting alternative visions for the future.

Following a presentation of politicized aesthetics in the years after 1967, the remainder of this introduction explores conceptualizations of collective steadfastness in Palestinian narratives, the Marxist contributions of Kanafani and other key figures on regional exile, and histories of scholarship on Palestinian music. A final section outlines the main chapter themes and methodology.

### **“Ana Ismi Sha’b Falastin”: My Name Is the Palestinian People**

“George Kirmiz was a phenomenon,”<sup>10</sup> says writer and activist Khaled Barakat, remembering an early 1980s childhood in al-Ram, north of

Jerusalem. In the streets of nearby Qalandiya refugee camp, people would wake up to Kirmiz's revolutionary songs being played and sold outside their doors; Palestinian cassette vendors were arrested by the Zionist occupiers with ferocity, and Israeli soldiers had done their homework on which recording artists to target.

He became really famous and his songs were sung by us all. His music was also new to us: people assumed he was a Lebanese singer because his music was not [Arab] classical, he didn't use a lot of *oud* and *qanun*, he'd use guitar, piano, or electric organ . . . almost like [Lebanese musician] Ziad Rahbani, but not so jazzy.

Barakat remembers being a hyperactive child, passing through the village kindergartens, where the Communist Party nursery run by the Women's Movement was a favorite. There, children would sing Kirmiz songs along with those by fellow Jerusalemite Mustafa al-Kurd, by al-Ashiqeen, and by Marcel Khalife. Giving new meaning to mass production, much of this music traveled regionally via cheaply produced cassettes, the distribution frequently doubling up as political fundraisers. Kirmiz's early 1980s recordings were eagerly bought and sold by Palestinian students in Egypt and in Gaza at Rafah and Nuseirat camp, and they were heard by refugees in Damascus.

Few realized how far the music had actually traveled and many wondered whether Kirmiz (Figure 1) was a *fida'i* fighting on the Lebanese front. Others outside Palestine knew that his songs were recorded from exile in Michigan in the United States, where original cassette and vinyl pressings revealed that Kirmiz distributed the recordings from his home in Ypsilanti.<sup>11</sup> Not even his friends and bandmates knew why he had left, but his arrest by Zionist occupiers must have factored highly in his decision. Israeli censorship had plagued concerts in Jerusalem, with Palestinian bands having to submit song lists; cassette carriers were arrested, along with al-Kurd, Suhail Khoury, Jamil Sayegh, Issa Boulos, and other musicians.

Kirmiz grew up in a working-class Syriac-Palestinian family in Jerusalem. He had learned guitar from his friends in the al-Bara'em group and joined the band during an intensification of the Palestinian struggle. They performed Beatles and Hendrix covers before relaunching in 1973 as a political band. Songwriter Emile Ashrawi remembers:



1. George Kirmiz onstage with al-Bara'em at Collège de Frères, Jerusalem, 1975. Source: Palestinian Museum, Birzeit, Palestine.

When the movement emerged, we were still playing Western instruments. We didn't play *oud* or *qanun*. . . . We began to write our own songs, with a mix between *watani* and revolutionary ideas, coming from a leftist perspective. . . . There were no other groups in the Arab world that I knew of at the time who played political song with rock n roll, but our concerns were not just local, we were internationalists.<sup>12</sup>

From his U.S. base, Kirmiz became the quintessential musician of the *ghurba*, or place of exile, contributing on the ground while engaging in activist circles, performing regularly for Palestinian socialists in the U.S. Finding his own voice away from al-Bara'em, he would ally the simplicity of Western pop with Arab traditional elements, and self-penned lyrics with those by leftist poets like Palestinian Tawfiq Zayyad ("Sabran, lan yantansir al-nabu 'ala basmati tifli" [Patience, their fangs will not triumph over my child's smile]) and Egyptian Ahmad Fu'ad Nigm ("Inwan al-beit" [Address of the house]).

On a 1981 debut cassette, which became hugely popular in the camps, Kirmiz typified the style hinted at by Barakat, recording simply with acoustic guitar, piano, tabla, and voice. The hook is melodically simple

and repetitive, mostly within the lower range of *maqam* ‘*ajam*, approximate to a major scale, and the rhythm (*baladi*) constant and undecorated. Its lyrics would be sung by a generation:

My name is the Palestinian people  
 My name is the Palestinian people  
 Today I die  
 Today I resist  
 Today I live

My name is the Palestinian people  
 I am from Turmus ‘Ayya  
 And from Tiberias  
 I am the son of Arab Jerusalem  
 Your son, Palestine  
 Until victory  
 Until the defeat of imperialism  
 My name is the Palestinian people  
 My name is the Palestinian people

Absorbing the singer into the Palestinian collective, the lyrics, co-penned by Kirmiz and an unnamed “Belgian struggler,”<sup>13</sup> voiced steadfastness, resistance, and social revolution. Their message rejected individualism in favor of the collective revolutionary mass at a time of rising national liberation, guerrilla movements, protest, and cultural renaissance among displaced Palestinians. The act of replacing oneself with the movement, evoking duty and commitment to a collective cause was taken up by other Palestinian musicians. Bands like Kofia and Sabaya al-Intifada (Young Women of the Intifada) released recordings without listing musicians’ names,<sup>14</sup> while the Italy-based Handala band sang: “I’ve been raised from this land; /My name is Palestinian Arab.”<sup>15</sup>

### Theorizing Steadfast Resistance in Exile

Released from imprisonment in July 2018 after serving eight months for slapping an occupying soldier in her village of Nabi Saleh, seventeen-year-old Ahed Tamimi told reporters that she had stood up as a freedom

fighter, adding “I will not be the victim.”<sup>16</sup> Motifs of defiance, endurance, and grassroots resistance in the face of Zionist oppression are often translated under the rubric of *sumud*. Kirmiz’s lyrics offer an example of the political content of *sumud* narratives in the post-1967 era through which occupied and displaced Palestinians found the power to endure. Seeing the grander target as an imperialist system denying the masses their freedom, and rejecting victimhood and personal identification, musicians emerged as counterparts to the poetic rebellion of Mahmoud Darwish’s “Record—I am an Arab,” which a number of composers including Kirmiz, Salvador Arnita, and Zeinab Shaath separately put to music. The work of Kirmiz illustrates that this experience was fundamentally collective, naming depopulated and colonized villages and towns to which refugees in a wider region drew their heritage and pinned their hopes.

In a seminal text on the national commemoration practices of Palestinian camps in Lebanon, Laleh Khalili defines *sumud* narratives as inherently optimistic, valorizing the nation’s endurance in dire circumstances.<sup>17</sup> Unlike heroic narratives, she suggests, *sumud* celebrates collective defense through holding communities together rather than committing daring militant acts. *Sumud* actions frequently evoke an ongoing struggle for Palestinian survival and have been personified at various historic moments by mothers, *fellahin* (peasants), camp dwellers, families, and communities of refugees, narrated through references to the land, olives, and nature. Swedish vocalist Carina Olsson was involved in choosing the sleeve for the 1979 Kofia album *Earth of My Homeland*—which shows a refugee woman baking bread—recalling with pride that the photo showed “that she’s very strong . . . and wants to continue the struggle to free Palestine.”<sup>18</sup> During fieldwork for this book, musicians drew on the language of *sumud* directly, also using words like *samid/samida* (male/female of a person embodying *sumud*) and *nusmud* (“we become *samid*,” linked to *nithammil*—“we endure”).

Amid the devastation of the Lebanese war, *sumud* was pursued as a policy of resistance in Gaza and the West Bank from 1982 to 1993,<sup>19</sup> promoting rootedness to the land<sup>20</sup> and civil disobedience. Zionist literature had always seen such roots as a threat, depicting Arab backwardness while attempting to mimic connections to the land as their own.<sup>21</sup> Intellectuals Raja Shehadeh and Edward Said advocated what they saw as a fightback that could not be won solely by military means, with Shehadeh framing

*sumud* as alternative resistance.<sup>22</sup> *Sumud* is variously interpreted as stoic persistence in the face of abnormal living conditions<sup>23</sup> or as a form of “cultural solidarity” in the case of Palestinian hip-hop.<sup>24</sup>

Understanding communal memory in exile is also a concern of Miri-yam Aouragh, for whom Palestinian existence continues to be “embedded in colonialism and anti-colonial struggle,” with the armed struggle providing a particular impulse for its evolution.<sup>25</sup> In the late novellas of Kanafani, the drudgery of refugee camp life, war, and the loss of land and family reach revolutionary conclusions in favor of armed resistance. Facing differing conditions of displacement in Lebanon and Palestine, his characters Umm Sa’d and the married couple, Said S. and Safieh, in *Returning to Haifa*, encourage their sons to become *fida’iyin*.<sup>26</sup>

Like Kanafani’s prose, the poetic material and storytelling on which much of Palestinian music is built defies the separation of armed struggle and basic survival, often indexing further struggles in Arab lands. A well-known (and widely covered) song released in 1976 by Egyptian resistance singer Sheikh Imam, and set to poetry by his comrade lyricist Nigm, exhibits Arab solidarity and *sumud* motifs:

Oh Palestinian people  
 With guns they expelled you  
 Through Zionism your doves are killed beside you  
 Oh Palestinian people, I wish to travel with you  
 With fire in my hand  
 And by my hands I struggle with you.

Here, the voices of the steadfast dispossessed are joined by international revolutionaries fraternally pledging to be part of the fightback.<sup>27</sup> The final phrase of this stanza could also be translated as “I go down with you,” expressing links to themes of *intifada* songs, of going “down to the streets” in protest, or fighting until martyrdom. Having fire in hand rejects the liberal politics of nonviolence and suggests that *sumud* narratives intersect with the resistance poetics of armed struggle. A definition that encompasses both politicized rootedness and anticolonial confrontation may be viewed as the classic framing of *sumud*, formed in conversation with other forms of revolutionary nationalist, grassroots, and factional

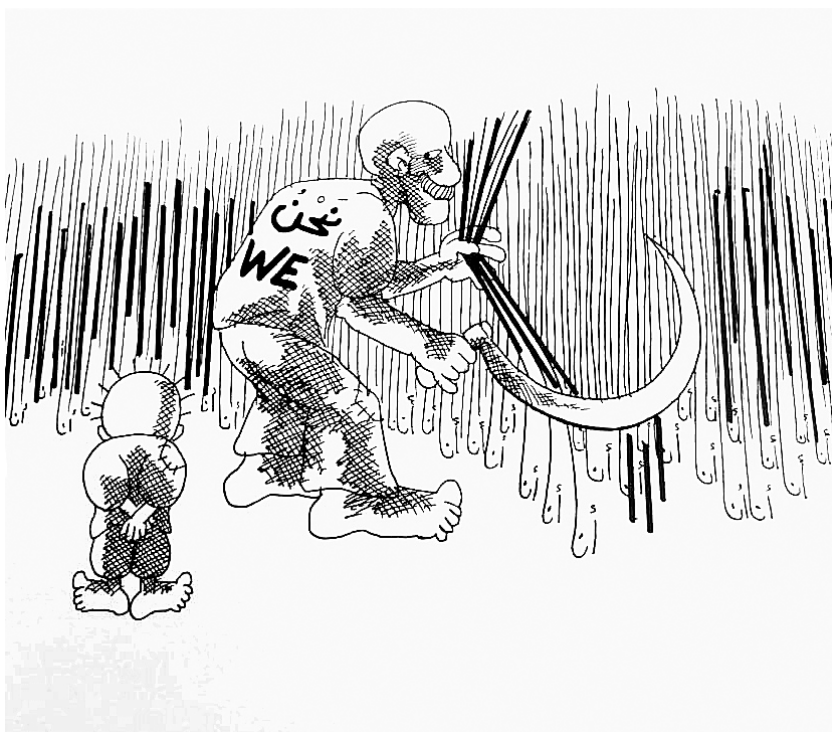
expression within and outside of Palestine. Though Said, for example, argued for the primacy of moral struggle, he had also supported the armed resistance, as shown in his response to the battle of al-Karamah in 1968, in the decade to follow in Lebanon, and into the twenty-first century.<sup>28</sup> As Tahrir Hamdi argues, Said's "form of resistant thinking also involves taking up arms in order to fight the colonizer."<sup>29</sup>

Highlighting an essential collectivity at the heart of *sumud*, the plural of *samid/samida*—*samidoun*—appears in lyrical, poetic, and campaign imagery. Among many phrases bringing together the "we" of strugglers for Palestine, "samidoun" is repeated by a mass choir in "Ghina'iyat Ahmad al-'Arabi," Marcel Khalife's epic 1984 setting of a Mahmoud Darwish story-poem; Samidoun is also the name of the international Palestinian prisoners' solidarity network launched in 2011, and appeared on banners behind musicians performing in the rubble of the Mashal theater in August 2018. In 1974, Fatah-linked band Firqat al-Markaziya had released "Ana Samid" (I am steadfast) as part of an album of resistance songs and poems, which became emblematic of the era.<sup>30</sup>

Representations of *sumud* were not without critique, however. As Issa Boulos argues, Hussain al-Bargouthi's "Jbieneh" poem, set to music by Said Murad of the Sabreen band, took an implicit swipe at the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leadership's handling of a national steadfastness fund, while the song reoriented Jerusalem as a primary symbol of struggle.<sup>31</sup> As if to continue this critique of contemporary developments, a cartoon published on January 26, 1987, by Naji al-Ali foregrounded a barefoot Palestinian peasant alongside Handala, the boy witness; the two see before them a field of wheat shaped as thousands of stalks of *ana*, the Arabic word for "I" or "me."<sup>32</sup> Armed with a Soviet-style sickle and wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with "*nahnu*—WE," the *fellah* cuts down the *ana* wheat, signaling that the way forward is in the rejection of detached individualism (Figure 2). The cartoon was printed onto T-shirts and worn by activists during the intifada.

Influenced by Kanafani, the socialist arguments of al-Ali's drawings found parallels in the work of Iraqi Marxist poet Abdel Wahab al-Bayati, who is discussed in chapter 2, in Jordan's Irbid camp. Al-Bayati argued for the prioritization of the poem, the text, over the individual person.<sup>33</sup> Displaced from Nazareth to Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1967, Kofia band founder





2. The child witness Handala watches as the steadfast *fellah* cuts down the “ana” (I) of individualism. Naji al-Ali, January 20, 1986. Courtesy Wedad El-Ali.

George Totari recalled: “We were doing our duty. Our names were not important.”<sup>34</sup> The group’s music shared the leftist principles of Kirmiz and others, and was sung bilingually:

And we will free our land  
From imperialism  
And we will rebuild our land  
For socialism  
And the whole world will witness  
Long live Palestine!  
Crush Zionism!<sup>35</sup>

Al-Ali’s intervention may also be seen as a warning, a critique of individualism and privilege. He also famously opposed the hero worship of

Yasser Arafat. This critical position anticipated the post-Oslo years, when a privileged minority of Palestinians would benefit and the refugee masses would be forgotten. In those years, creative individualism was promoted by European NGO funders, opposing grassroots collectivity and engaged politics.<sup>36</sup> While musical and social trends have changed with the times—such as the relative decline of *zajjal* poet-singers and the later rise of selfie-style social media musicking—the narratives of the musicians in this book point to the collective social origins of performance, with frequent espousals of *sumud* indicating that steadfastness continues to have relevance for new generations.

Some recent analyses have sought to depoliticize and individualize *sumud*, seeing it and the national liberation struggle as something past, with *sumud* as now embodying a concept through which colonialism is merely “contested,” or as linked to a “suffering ethic” on the part of the Palestinian people.<sup>37</sup> Such academic and liberal Zionist reconceptualizations of *sumud* occurred in the period of crisis following the Oslo accords, when Zionist settlement building, warmongering belligerence, and impoverishment of displaced Palestinians in surrounding countries were the context of a deepening crisis of leadership in the Palestinian movement.

Repositioning *sumud* as the revolutionary force and agency of the oppressed, Lena Meari develops a Marxist perspective on the struggles of Palestinian political prisoners, or “Palestinians in *sumud*,” whereby a refusal to cooperate or surrender to colonial authority marks a “revolutionary becoming” in the process of political organizing.<sup>38</sup> While *sumud* has “no fixed meaning”—it brings together multiple practices and significations—its lived experiences amount to “a Palestinian anticolonial mode of being,” a continual process of reorganization, and the forging of new human beings.

Music also features in Meari’s prisoner ethnographies, with Sabreen songs recited by inmates during the first intifada as part of the self-nurturing of revolutionary consciousness. Further indicating the tendency of musical stories to travel, former political prisoners—many of them refugees—recorded and performed on their release, for example in the *qasida* of Salah Abd al-Ruba, “Ya Naqab kuni irada” (Oh Naqab, be strong), composed in a notorious Israeli jail and later sung by *oud* player Ibrahim Salah on the outside. The constant flow of prisoners through the Zionist regime also serves as a reminder of the unfinished business of

liberation, serving by their very existence as a critique of failed Palestinian Authority (PA) diplomatic strategies, which collaborates in their capture. Largely occurring outside of the PA umbrella, celebrations accompanying family, friend, and comrade reunions invariably feature music and song.

It is not argued here that all musical expressions of exile carry *sumud* narratives by nature of being Palestinian—or that all Palestinian music represents *sumud* or resistance—but the particular placement of music and political culture in exilic stories is evocative of the power of collective will arising from colonial displacement. Through communal experiences of music, *sumud* narratives are found in the wedding poetry of women and *zajjalin* (chapter 1); in the band repertoire that challenges displacement in Lebanon (chapter 2); in connections to land lost by internal refugees in Gaza and historic Palestine (chapters 3, 5); in the songs of women’s organizations that keep communities together in Egypt (chapter 4); in the transmission of revolutionary song through the musical activism of youth in Gaza (chapter 6); and in the group performances that organize revolutionary consciousness in Istanbul (chapter 7). Many of these examples embody critical views of places of exile and post-Oslo viewpoints on Palestinian society and raise important questions on national and international crises.

### Marxism and the Aesthetics of Palestinian Exile in the Middle East

I do not exonerate the vipers of the oil wells  
or pass light sentence on their petrodollars  
—AHMAD DAHBUR, 1943<sup>39</sup>

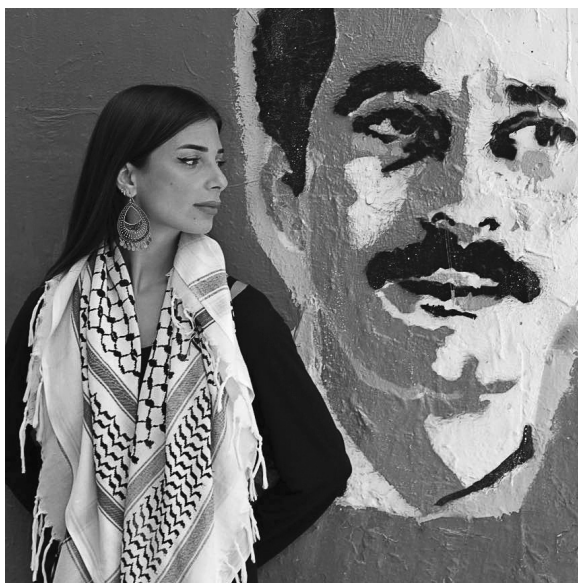
Focusing on narratives of Palestinian exile, this section builds a Marxist framework for understanding the social contexts of music in Palestinian displacement. It starts by offering brief definitions of conditions facing Palestinian refugees in an expansive region. I see the tasks of reclaiming and deepening understandings of Arab Marxism, and the largely untapped theoretical contributions of Kanafani, as key to addressing questions of artistic tradition, cosmopolitanism, and struggle. The political and cultural analyses of Kanafani and a generation of Palestinian revolutionaries bound by comradeship offer ways of grasping the interests of states, classes,

power plays, and global relationships that continue to shape the region. Returning to the theme of *sumud*, I trace the threads that link the critiques of these figures with the grassroots criticism found in musical contributions to this text.

Referencing the experience of being away from one's homeland, the term *ghurba* is not exclusive to Palestine and its use pre-dates the Nakba, appearing in a range of Arab literatures and in generalized uses. Its many sung examples range widely from versions of the Palestinian folksong "Ya zarif al-tul" (Oh tall handsome one) to Julia Boutros's 2001 recording of "Nihna al-thawra wa-l-ghadab" (We are the revolution and the anger). Coincidentally, both Ahmad Al Khatib and Reem Anbar, *oud* players of different generations and at different stages of their careers, have composed instrumental pieces with the title "Ghurba," expressing their frustration at leaving Palestine. For these musical links and for its wider connotations, I use the term *ghurba*, rather than *shatat* (a dispersed existence) or *hijra* (a journey away). Translating *ghurba* as "exile" rather than "diaspora" also avoids an unhelpful equation with the biblically mythologized Jewish experience, which explains some writers' aversion to describing a Palestinian diaspora.<sup>40</sup> These include Said, who favored the term "dispersed national community" and associated diaspora with the "screaming hostility [and] glib language of dismissal and contempt" displayed by U.S. Zionists.<sup>41</sup>

Said also points to the significance of a neighboring region to Palestinian struggles: "The biggest concentration of Palestinians, then, is in the Arab world, unlike Diaspora Zionism, which is largely a European phenomenon."<sup>42</sup> While the Middle East is a debated and sometimes rejected term,<sup>43</sup> whose parameters are ill-defined, it is widely used, including by Said, who criticized others for paying little attention to the broader regional context of Palestinian exile.<sup>44</sup>

The views of Kanafani (Figure 3), who referred to both the "Middle East" and "the region" (*al-mintaqa*), came to be built on a Marxist-Leninist understanding of the international context for Palestinian resistance. In an epochal Beirut interview, Kanafani defended Palestinian guerrilla actions against King Hussein's Jordanian regime, rejecting media descriptions of a "conflict," and opposing negotiations with Israel as "a conversation between the sword and the neck."<sup>45</sup> Kanafani divided Palestinian revolutionaries' then categorization of existing Arab governments into two kinds:



3. Vocalist Rola Azar appears in front of a Ghassan Kanafani mural, Nazareth, May 2021. Public domain.

first, “Reactionaries, who are completely connected to the imperialists”—he lists Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Tunisia—and, second, “military petit-bourgeois governments . . . Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, and so on.” Kanafani’s analysis brought class power into an understanding of dependency and imperialist entanglement in the Middle East, and developed proposals on how revolutionaries could build against this context through political culture.

For Kanafani and other Palestinian and Arab Marxists, and for an international trend that included Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, the Black Panthers, Amilcar Cabral, Mao, and many others, imperialism was defined in Leninist terms as the era of wars and revolutions, of the division of the world into oppressed and oppressor nations, the dominance of monopoly finance capital, and interimperialist rivalry.<sup>46</sup> In the tribute to Kanafani published in *al-Hadaf* after his assassination on July 8, 1972, Marwan defines Kanafani’s concept of imperialism as “a mobile body, an octopus which colonizes and exploits, spreading itself over the world through western monopolistic enterprises.”<sup>47</sup> Regularly theorizing under different names in *al-Hadaf* and other publications, Kanafani wrote much that was unreleased in his lifetime, and left a collection of notebooks that

arguably form the *Grundrisse* of Arab Marxism, spanning cultural lessons, political strategy, and historical analyses.<sup>48</sup>

Writing on the Arab cause during the era of the United Arab Republic, Kanafani refers to reactionary regimes as “colonial agents,” and predicts that the unity of the Arab masses, in a social movement “progressive and democratic in nature . . . will rob the reactionary of his false throne in the process of socialist construction.”<sup>49</sup> Palestinian exile is set against the backdrop of struggle between imperialism and the forces of the globally oppressed, as Kanafani charts the influx of Western media culture into Lebanon and other formally independent countries. The critique of imperialist embroilment of reactionary bourgeoisies, monarchies, and military-backed states forms an important frame of reference for the spaces offered and denied to Palestinian performers in the regional *ghurba*, a frame unstated in academic interpretations of Kanafani’s novelistic writing, which sideline his Marxist understanding of imperialism and resistance.<sup>50</sup>

Drawing on both fiction and political texts in the Kanafani catalog allows us to shed new light on ideas of contrasting musical language in Bilad al-Sham (chapter 2), repetition and renewal in Egypt (chapter 4), and grassroots cultural organizing in Istanbul (chapter 7). I also see arguments made in the drawings of Palestinian cartoonist Naji al-Ali as critiquing contemporary bourgeois politics and illustrating aesthetic connections between art, *sumud*, and resistance. His works frequently depict Arab leaders as oil- and money-thirsty collaborators in Palestinian oppression and—as in one cartoon featuring the pyramids and Menachem Begin—as being in the pockets of Zionism and imperialism.<sup>51</sup>

Following these socialist analyses alongside ethnographic discussion allows for critical perspectives on “host countries,” aiming toward deeper understandings of culture and imperialism. This includes interrogating policies of Jordanization, Kuwaitization, and phenomena such as the “Arab Spring,”<sup>52</sup> in a wider context, while recentering Palestinian heritages of revolution and forging of cultural space.

As shown in chapter 1, the presence and expulsion of Naji al-Ali from Kuwait is emblematic of the routes of other Palestinians, and raises questions about the idea of refuge under states involved in war and exploitation. For Marx, “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.”<sup>53</sup> The explicit logic of Kanafani’s revolutionary perspective—and, I

argue, the cultural and political organizing of many exile groups—helps set in motion the Marxist conclusion that the system creates its own gravediggers.<sup>54</sup> The refugee camp incubation and urban dispersals of the period after 1948 eventually gave rise to a new anticolonial struggle and cultural renaissance based on the oppressed people of Palestine. Pulsations in musical tradition and innovation were impacted by and formed part of the national liberation movement.

The political solidarity provided by Marx and Engels to the Irish liberation movement a century before offered an early blueprint for the Marxist view of the right of nations to self-determination,<sup>55</sup> later developed by Lenin and Indian revolutionary M. N. Roy during debates in the Communist International. Their points were not missed by Kanafani, who contrasts “negative” bourgeois nationalism with “the nationalism that Marx did not have the opportunity to see and experience”:

It is a nationalism based on freedom, because it believes in itself as a value in which human creativity grows, and based on socialism, which provides the opportunities for citizens to express their genius, and to understand their position in the group of nationalities which constitute the frameworks of true humanity.<sup>56</sup>

Inspired by his witnessing of revolutionary China, Kanafani situates Palestine within the revolutionary national liberation struggles of the twentieth century, which had more recently included Vietnam, Korea, Cuba, Algeria, and Ireland. Characteristically, he linked these struggles to the fight for new culture, new human beings, and socialism.<sup>57</sup>

Among his final articles in *Shu'un Falastiniya* (Palestinian issues) in 1972, Kanafani contrasts the unfiltered flow into Arab countries of Western newspapers carrying anti-Arab racism and pro-Israel content, while regional states clamped down on the political reading materials of Palestinian students.<sup>58</sup> Seeing “popularization of a scientific national culture” as “first step of building the revolution,” Kanafani calls on the Arab masses to exercise their “right (and duty) to learn of the enemy’s ideas and achievements.” At the same time, he warns against complacency and idleness of “opening the doors of the media invasion too widely,” to allow the masses to fall victim to its psychological warfare, or into accepting “a culture of surrender and contempt.”<sup>59</sup>



There are links in this analysis of Bilad al-Sham to concepts of cosmopolitanism, also described in Kuwait by Leila Khaled,<sup>60</sup> and they are interesting in light of the kinds of worldly influences brought into Palestinian musicianship from the 1960s. Said would later describe imperialism as “the major, I would say determining, political horizon of modern Western culture.”<sup>61</sup> Though his conceptualization of imperialism had its contradictions,<sup>62</sup> Said drew heavily on Marxism, as shown in recent works by Brennan<sup>63</sup> and Ó Ruairc, and he criticized Adorno and Jameson, who he saw as cleansing Marxism of its revolutionary conclusions.<sup>64</sup> Both Kanafani (on Leninist organizing) and Said (on history and class consciousness, and aesthetic theory) channeled the Marxism of Lukács in particular, whose influence Said also saw in the contributions of Fanon. Said’s view of Marx’s “methodological revolution” for critical consciousness is brought into discussions of Palestinian musicianship in Egypt in chapter 4.<sup>65</sup>

Following Meari’s reconsideration of *sumud* as enabling collective resistance and revolutionary engagement, I link the critical analyses of Kanafani, Khaled, al-Ali, and Said on Zionism, Arab reaction, and the Palestinian comprador bourgeoisie to the grassroots interventions of the masses in what I call *sumud-as-critique*. Exhibiting this often biting narrative in Rosemary Sayigh’s work on displaced Palestinian peasants, one refugee woman remarks incisively on the position of leading Arab politicians: “Anyone who wants to become a mukhtar [village leader] makes a speech about Palestine!”<sup>66</sup> Among the many examples in this book, musicians point their critique at the war and blockade of Syria, European-inspired music conservatoire models, the pressures of ’48 Palestinians to collude with Israel, and the impoverishment of refugees after Oslo.

Seeing waves of Palestinian musical tradition, cosmopolitanism, and revolutionization through Kanafani’s lens of popular struggle and Marxism offers tools to locate the collective roots of Palestinian musicianship. Amid ongoing regional upheavals and international crises, this range of contributions on Middle East exile also allows for a reconsideration of recent writing on culture in the post-2011 Arab world, challenging blanket views of the progressive nature of the “Arab Spring” and instead reinstating Palestinian heritages of anti-imperialism and cultural rebellion. My contention here is that the rediscovery of Palestinian contributions to revolutionary thought sets a challenge to frameworks that see imperialism and national liberation either as irrelevant or as phenomena of the past.



Following the Marxist understanding wielded by Kanafani and his comrades provides a crucial contextual backdrop to wider discussions of culture, exile, war, cosmopolitanism, NGOization, Islamism, and a vast range of subjects that the musicians' narratives throw up.

Though the stories are often focused on close communal experiences, their gravitation home and away from Palestine also widens the scope of critique and context. Or, to borrow the analogy used by Gurhpal Singh on India and the Punjab, the weathervane between homeland and exile sees those outside the country both leading and responding to events back home.<sup>67</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod remarks:

I'm continually floored by Palestinians' creativity in responding to Israeli violence. Palestinian artists, musicians, and filmmakers are engaged in the struggle and responsive to the dire situation in which Palestinians find themselves.<sup>68</sup>

The adoption of old and new forms of cultural expression allows no easy separation from politics. This book shows that, in the Palestinian case, musical traditions seen as apolitical, elite, or foreign are reappropriated, nationalized, and injected with new radical meaning by a committed grassroots. Music is not a universal language but a site of confrontation.

### **A Capsule Review of Palestinian Music Literature**

The premeditated shattering of historic Palestine by the 1948 Nakba lacerated the musical socialities of urban and rural spaces, catalyzed by the British Mandate and its suppression of the Palestinian Revolution of 1936–39. Many musicians suffered the same fate as the Palestinian people at large, ethnically cleansed and dispersed within and outside Palestine. In an ongoing Nakba, music research, like other fields of Palestinian scholarship, has been systematically denied “stability, continuity, and possibilities for long-term planning.”<sup>69</sup> Documenting and preserving cultural histories in this context has meant piecing together of scant available resources, exacerbated by the theft of pre-1948 materials by the Zionist state.<sup>70</sup> In the development of indigenous research, scholarship and activism are indivisible, while musicians themselves collect songs and materials, playing dual roles as researchers and performers.

This section briefly charts movements in Palestinian music research. While earlier periods of European Orientalist monographs are also revealing,<sup>71</sup> the following overview highlights key contemporary trends, emphasizing a drive to preserve and transmit a national heritage under threat, and providing some background to aesthetic and sociopolitical explorations in this book. Recognizing at the outset that ethnomusicologists and Western academic contributors are late arrivals, I situate indigenous research within counternarratives of post-1948 Palestine, with musicians, folklorists, activists, and academics pioneering a survivalist field of study against the grain of cultural Zionism.

From Kafr 'Ain village, poet and folklorist Abdelatif al-Bargouthi (1928–2002) remains the most widely published Palestinian music researcher, rivaling classical scholar al-Farabi for prolificacy, with twenty-five books, two postgraduate theses, and a raft of articles based on research mainly in Palestine and Jordan. From the 1960s, these included detailed essays on the folk genres of *'ataba* (1986), *dal'una* (1990), and *Zarif al-tul* (1980). Primarily poetic forms with no known composer, the songs are set to orally remembered melodies, usually around repeated *maqam* phrases, with rhyme structures manipulated typically by the *zajjal*, or poet-singer. On the *'ataba* form alone, al-Bargouthi collected over 2,000 lyric stanzas, noting the particularly village or region-specific use of Arabic language to describe historic events, and arguing for the value of *'ammiya* (colloquial Arabic) as the object of study.<sup>72</sup>

The research of al-Bargouthi may now be seen as part of a wider folklorist trend, emerging in earnest with the Palestinian revolution of the 1960s. This work ranged from collections of the lyrics of liberation and intifada songs;<sup>73</sup> fieldwork carried out among Palestinian refugees in Jordan;<sup>74</sup> analyses of orientalism, Zionism, and Palestinian folk song;<sup>75</sup> and documentation of specific poetic forms.<sup>76</sup> A large body of work was built up documenting the wedding traditions of historic Palestine, looking at the role of women-centered songs,<sup>77</sup> and the “debates” present in sung *hida* poetry,<sup>78</sup> which Dirgham Sbait lists as ranging from “praise; politics; love; descriptions of the occasion; and social, educational, and intellectual issues.”<sup>79</sup> This description could be applied to Palestinian music more generally, and it hints at the multiple musical approaches taking shape at various moments.

Committed to research as part of their performance practice, musicians have played important roles in Palestinian drives to reclaim, document,

and preserve musical heritage. The revolution in Palestinian consciousness and resistance after 1967 saw defining and appropriating the *turath al-sha'bi* (popular heritage) as part of a developing national movement, where folklore accompanied and fused with political song. In the 1970s, folklorist-musicians such as al-Ashiqeen founder Hussain Nazik (in Syria), poet Abu Arab (Lebanon, then Syria), and *oud* player and songwriter Mustafa al-Kurd (occupied Jerusalem and later Europe) built repertoires and compositions around materials they found through engagement in oral history. Comparable roles were played regionally by figures including Syrian vocalist Sabah Fakhri and Palestinian music director Sabri al-Sharif—who worked on the Lebanese Rahbani brothers musicals of the 1960s. Palestinian composer-researchers active in the years before 1967 include Rima Naser Tarzi, who led groups of children and adults in various types of Palestinian *anashid* (hymns) and *qasa'id* (plural of *qasida*, poetry) under Jordanian rule.

From 1979, the Palestine-based El-Funoun arts troupe (Firqat al-Funun al-Sha'biya) presented visual arts and *dabke* dancing alongside a campaign to document musical material from folk histories of Palestine, following “extensive research in Palestinian villages,” aiming at “preserving centuries-old songs and dances,” with mostly traditional instruments;<sup>80</sup> the troupe is aligned to leftist activism and the work of the Popular Arts Centre in al-Bireh, which it helped to found.<sup>81</sup>

Those contributing to the excavation and renewal of musical *turath* included older *zajjal*in such as Rajah al-Salfiti (1921–1990) and Yusuf Abu Leil (1936–2019), joined by a new generation in the 1980s, who elevated instruments like keyboards, drum machines, and particularly the synthesized *mijwiz* (double-reed wind instrument) in their work. These included Ibrahim Sbehat (b. 1969), Maher Halabi (b. 1973), and Shafiq Kabha (1960–2013),<sup>82</sup> all of whom combined song collecting with singing. Many such figures faced direct repression: al-Salfiti was arrested on his return from Bilad al-Sham in the early 1970s, and Kabha faced bans from both Israeli and Egyptian authorities.

The 1980s saw new English-language texts charting the development of popular song in recent decades, finding some coverage in European “world music” publications, including Rough Guides chapters spotlighting Mustafa al-Kurd, al-Ashiqeen, and Sabreen, and the ability of Palestinian music to chronicle historic events and figures, from Izz al-Din al-Qassam

and Arafat to Che Guevara.<sup>83</sup> Though articles by Morgan and Adileh were dwarfed in British publications by space set aside to discussing Israeli and Jewish music,<sup>84</sup> their contributions nevertheless hinted at the existence of sympathetic audiences. New ethnomusicological research programs emerging in the post-Oslo period include those detailing traditions in wedding performance<sup>85</sup> and intifada singing.<sup>86</sup>

In an article from 2005, Joseph Massad analyses the history of songs about Palestine from 1948 onward, looking at the content of musical contributions by Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers, the musicians of the Egyptian anti-imperialist trend of the 1950s, and Palestinian songwriters and performers in the years after. Pointing, importantly, to the contributions of other Arab musicians, Massad finds a lack of academic engagement with patriotic, nationalist, and revolutionary songs produced in the modern Arab world, particularly as they relate to Palestine.<sup>87</sup> Such gaps are partly addressed by David McDonald, whose work references Julia Boutros, Ahmad Kaabour, and a number of regional musicians devoting songs to the Palestinian cause. Social repertoires of song among Palestinians meant that “protest songs were sung at weddings as often as wedding songs were sung at protests, if such a distinction could ever be made.”<sup>88</sup> Pointing to the outward-looking aesthetic ideals that shaped new generations’ experiences of performance, Nadeem Karkabi looks into alternative scenes developed by Palestinians in the *dakhil* (the “interior” of historic Palestine, now labeled “Israel”), assessing the musical and organizational forms and problems of access faced by supporters of electro-*mijwiz*, hip-hop, electronica, and rave musics.<sup>89</sup>

In *Palestinian Music and Song*, coeditor Moslih Kanaaneh makes the point that Palestinian discourses are shared with the fates of oppressed peoples internationally, yet he emphasizes the distinctly colonial conditions under which they continue to operate. It follows that “since music is an integral component of culture, music produced under occupation is inevitably music of resistance, whether it is political or not, politicized or not.”<sup>90</sup> Important contributions to the volume include Issa Boulos on the musical poetics of Sabreen,<sup>91</sup> and the critiques of Yara El-Ghadban and Kiven Strohm of musical NGOization in occupied Palestine.<sup>92</sup> Nader Jalal and Boulos reveal the historic cosmopolitanism of music in Palestine and the ruptures in the social fabric caused by the Nakba, confirmed in the published memoirs of musician and socialite Wasif

Jawhariyyeh (1904–48), whose chronicles traverse British intervention in Jerusalem.<sup>93</sup> Elsewhere, among oral historians remembering the pre-Nakba period, the narrative of Lebanon-based exile Husayn Lubani stands out for its detail on the musico-poetic revolutions taking place in Palestine during these years.<sup>94</sup>

Musician-intellectuals continue to develop research in tandem with their performance activities, with concerns ranging from instrumental theory and composition, as in the case of Nizar Rohana's work on Egyptian *oud* player Mohamed al-Qasabgi,<sup>95</sup> to collecting the songs and stories of Palestinian localities, as exhibited by the Dalal Abu Amneh series "Mishwar Sitti" (My grandmother's journey) project. The careers of many well-known Palestinian musicians, from Simon Shaheen to Sanaa Moussa, embed heritages of social learning on stages and in recordings. The histories of grassroots music contained in this book are suggestive of the exiled social constellations which have driven the committed musical narratives of new generations.

### Structure and Methods of This Book

With the aim of setting the stage, introducing the artists and delineating section themes, each chapter begins with a *mawqif*, roughly meaning a situation, anecdote, or the act of finding a place—a traveler's resting spot. Some of these *mawqif* (plural of *mawqif*) speak to the sense of conversation that many of the musicians encounter between places of childhood and later life, with some ending up in Europe in a further degree of separation from Palestine. Offering a pause in the book's chronological arc, these introductions range from witnessings of performances and contributors' stories to other fieldwork scenes.

Chapter 1 explores musical aesthetics and space for transmission thrown up by decades of exile in Kuwait. Focusing on the musical memories of vocalist Reem Kelani, whose family lived in the emirate until the expulsions accompanying the 1990–91 war with Iraq, a narrative of growing up through the 1967 crisis synchronizes the worldly musical tastes of a section of the exiles with Fairuz, wedding songs, and a working-class-led Palestinian renaissance in the intervening years. Discussing the limits of scholarly theories of cosmopolitanism, and following Mai Al-Nakib's view of Kuwait's ultimate inadequacy as a place of refuge, the chapter draws

on the critiques of Kanafani, al-Ali, and Leila Khaled, who all lived for periods in Kuwait. Reem's embrace of Palestinian wedding music and *sumud* narratives finds its backdrop in an oil state of intensifying contradictions.

Shifting from vocal musicianship, chapter 2 turns to contrasting modes of instrumental expression in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Taking as a starting point Kanafani's post-1967 call for new blood to replace the language of defeat, I trace the development of distinct musical dialects, or *lahajat*, in locations bound by differing opportunities and limitations. I see the musics of Ahmad Al Khatib (*oud*) in Irbid camp under 1980s Jordanian state repression, of Tareq Salhia's (guitar) endurance of the 2011 Syrian crisis, and a group of refugee players of the *girbeh* (bagpipe) in Borj el-Shemali camp, South Lebanon, as replying indirectly to Kanafani's call for critical spirit and creative responses to Palestinian dispersal. Such collectivist tendencies are counterposed with discussions of cultural rebellion since the 2011 crisis.

Shaped around the story of Umm Ali, a refugee woman who grew up in Gaza's Bureij camp, chapter 3 explores the transmission of traditional and rebellious song before and during the 1987–93 intifada. It revolves around the resistance, storytelling, and singing activities of a working-class socialist household, and through the "bridge" of music contextualizes the involvement of a young girl in the intifada through recollections of land lost in 1948. Framing land by way of Amirah Silmi's scholarship on Marx and Fanon, my analysis reestablishes the leadership of women in *sumud* as grassroots voices against the failures of bourgeois leadership, restating land as the basis for ongoing refugee connections to pre-Nakba Palestine.

Continuing to analyze poetic motifs of Palestine, Tamer Abu Ghazaleh's early work on the Cairo underground and as a child in a Palestinian choir is the springboard for chapter 4. I home in on ideas of repetition, as a dualistic concept applied to both new musical experimentation and Tamer's and Huda Asfour's influences from Palestinian band Sabreen. Analyzing music and poetry alongside Saidian and Marxist notions of repetition, I set aesthetic and political commitment within the context of late Mubarak-era Egypt. Ethnographic material here allows for exploring the limits of European methods of music transmission. In collective pedagogies built largely outside of establishment training in periods of revolutionary crisis, the presence of land and nation is embodied in an alternative music shaped by dialectic notions of tradition and invention.

A subtheme of previous chapters, the potentialities and problems of instrumentalism are given closer attention in chapter 5, whose central figure is *oud* player Saied Silbak. Returning to the words of Leila Khaled, this study of internal exile in historic Palestine muses on her call for instruments of social transformation. This focus is broadened with reference to the transformative, antiracist vision heard by Paul Gilroy in the guitar of Jimi Hendrix and through Cuban composer Leo Brouwer's views on decolonized culture. With such works in mind, the chapter assesses to what extent Saied's antinormalization position reflects the lived experiences of the internally displaced, offering questioning glimpses of indigenous liberation. Studying histories of Palestinian struggle in the "inside," the chapter also looks at the *oud*'s "contestation" in the ideological soundworld of Zionist colonization.

Chapter 6 returns to Gaza, to a second intifada generation, and looks at the musical and narrative critiques of the post-Oslo landscape. Communal music learnings in Gaza City by Reem Anbar (*oud*), Rawan Okasha (vocals), and Said Fadel (vocals, keyboards, *oud*), all born into displaced families in the 1990s, are explored via linked repertoires of contrasting music traditions. Drawing out Gaza's street-level cosmopolitanism, proletarianization, and historic social ferment, the music-linked criticism of the group at the occupation, underdevelopment, conservatism, and NGOized inequality are viewed as fundamentally at odds with imperialist and Zionist social commentary. Responding to the pleas of El Said, Meari, and Pratt, I see imperialist geopolitics as a backdrop to discourse on women's rights. The group's embrace of *sumud* is, I argue, exhibited in collective reclamation of public space, in streets where Israel reduces cultural centers and homes to rubble.

Leaving Gaza behind as refugees for a second time, Fares Anbar (percussion) and Ahmed Haddad (vocals, guitar) landed in Istanbul to find new problems as migrant workers. Chapter 7 shows the gravitation toward leftist social circles and politicized rethinking of a range of Arab and regional songs. Narrating these experiences, they espouse socialistic ideas on comradeship and have developed a closer-knit relationship to musicians and revolutionaries in Istanbul and on band trips to nearby islands. Following Jodi Dean's theory of the comrade, parallels are drawn with commitment in Palestinian literature, and with Meari's restating of the collective political content at the heart of notions of *sumud*. Viewed in this way,

reclaiming revolutionary traditions in musical poetry enables grounded reimaginings of the future.

The research carried out for this project was based on fieldwork conducted between 2013 and 2021, beginning in Palestine and expanding outward into Europe, where around half of the contributing musicians are now based. Many of the conversations, concerts, and other situations took place in Britain and gravitated dialogically back to childhoods, family histories, and lives in the Middle East. Others developed using digital technologies: with Syria and Southern Lebanon physically out of bounds, long-distance relationships proved invaluable and resulted in continuing research, which branched into further study and ongoing friendships. Gathering the primary material has taken on both formal methods of oral history and looser, more spontaneous forms of research, including dozens of in-depth, formal and informal interviews, discussions, jam sessions, unplanned participant observation, concert attendance, email correspondence, online video and voice calls, music sharing, and a range of other forms. The language of our exchanges, English or Arabic, differed from one musician to the next and, quite often, within one conversation or interview.

Plans for formal questioning quite often ascended into deeper discussion over food or between singing and playing, and those interviewed were not always musicians. I have many performers and listeners and their family members to thank for building my ethnographic knowledge of Palestinian cuisine, and I have come to associate certain musicians with certain dishes; the artist who introduced Marmite into this proud tradition will go unnamed.

The methodology of this work treads a line between those whose works I stylistically admire—the oral histories of Rosemary Sayigh and Ramzy Baroud, the spirited political incisiveness of my late comrade Trevor Rayne—and the different rigors of more “academic” approaches, including Martin Stokes, Virginia Danielson, and Issa Boulos in ethnomusicology. Where Lila Abu Lughod professes to being drawn to the lyricism of the “detail and empathy of the novelist,” rather than the “bold strokes of the polemicist,”<sup>96</sup> I seek to balance both, foregrounding the voices of participants and closely analyzing the histories of which they were a part. Adjoined to the main ethnographic process, I have consulted a range of historical and contemporary publications in English and Arabic, along



with lyrics, poetry, stories, and recordings, and thank all those who have shared prepublished works, helped bypass paywalls, and discussed the findings of their own ongoing research. This research has been carried out in harmony with boycott Israel campaigning.

I am minded to repeat Sayigh's call, which has guided the principles of my own work:

Finding ways to "indigenize" research and to feed results back into the community as tools for future struggle and self-determined development, would give oral history a role in decolonization practice that would justify its claims to radicalism.<sup>97</sup>

With these words in mind, it occurs to me to state that this work has always been motivated by revolutionary solidarity and advocacy along with an internationalist love for the music itself. While not overstating my own role, I hope this book contributes in even the smallest way to the musicians and music finding a wider audience. My "positionality" is one of an involved supporter, not just of the Palestinian cause but of the exploited and oppressed masses of every country in the fight for liberation and socialism.

## CHAPTER 1

# *Za'tar, Zeit, and Fairuz: Growing up Palestinian in Kuwait*

### Reem Kelani's Musical Beginnings

**T**hursday, July 24, 2014. In a magnolia-painted upstairs room at the Rich Mix club in Bethnal Green, East London, Reem Kelani anxiously prepared herself to take to the stage. Admitting that she felt in no fit state to perform due to a summer of asthma problems, Reem faced the added pressures of some telling her that singing was frivolous at a time when Gaza faced a brutal Israeli bombing campaign. That day, Zionist air-strikes had hit a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) during lessons in Beit Hanoun, killing eleven and wounding around 110 civilians.<sup>1</sup> People were fighting back, and Reem conceded that her work did not compare to those “facing the music, literally.”<sup>2</sup> For her part, Reem said she had to set aside all of her personal battles and devote herself to standing up as a Palestinian.

In our interview before the gig, Reem spoke of 1948 as “the original sin” and of how her refusal to work with Israelis was not helping her career in the “world music” scene: “I have to work hard to get a gig at Rich Mix,” let alone get a shot on the bigger stages. Now, in that desperate moment during Operation Protective Edge, Zionist war crimes were exposed to the world and thousands took to the streets in solidarity with the Gaza resistance. Reem’s performance was part of the same mobilization; those taking to the streets were opening up a space for nonmainstream expression, while the British ruling class collaborated with the Zionist bombing. Featuring her now customary setup of jazz piano, contrabass, and drums as accompaniment to her dramatic vocals, her versions of pre-Nakba songs and Sayyid Darwish classics were full of optimism:

There'll come a day  
 When we gloat at the merchants of war  
 And just as we've suffered  
 They too shall suffer  
 And we'll laugh our hearts out<sup>3</sup>

The arrangements were a reminder that in her early years Reem had been exposed to Palestinian wedding songs alongside jazz, pop, and the Great American Songbook, speaking to a time in Kuwait when the children of exiles “saw no contrast” in the songs they heard.

References to provocative mixings of musics and politics abounded. Palestinian student Anas said this was the first time he had attended one of her concerts; as a communist, he admitted to political differences with Reem but summer 2014 was a time for unified action.<sup>4</sup> Palestinian youths dragged strangers by the hands and jumped the stage during the encore, spontaneously forming *dabke* lines. The concert finale married a piano-led musical arrangement with rejectionist politics. “Mawtini” had been a popular rallying cry against British imperialism<sup>5</sup> and Reem saw it as “the real national anthem of Palestine,” as distinct from the “Fida’i” anthem taken up by the “Vichy government”<sup>6</sup> of the Palestinian Authority. Channeling the energy of the room, Reem’s voice strained with emotion as she sang:

Our glory  
 Is an honorable cause and a fluttering flag  
 Oh behold you in your eminence  
 Victorious over your enemies  
 My homeland

On the other side of this Shatt, just the other side, were all the things he had been deprived of. Over there was Kuwait. What only lived in his mind as a dream and a fantasy existed there. It was certainly something real, of stones, earth, water, and sky, not as it slumbered in his troubled mind. There must be lanes and streets, men and women, and children running about between the trees.

—GHASSAN KANAFANI, *MEN IN THE SUN*

Thanks to globalization, and it was happening even back then . . . pop music was big in Kuwait.<sup>7</sup>

—REEM KELANI

This chapter explores the materialities of music transmission during Reem Kelani's childhood in Kuwait, focusing on the period 1967–91, following the Naksa defeat and the reemergence of the Palestinian national liberation movement, which shaped her introduction to music performance. Kuwait was a conduit and one-time home to many leading figures in the insurrectionary Palestinian political and cultural scene in the decades after the Nakba, including Ghassan Kanafani, Naji al-Ali, Yasser Arafat, and Mahmoud Abbas. Stories of postindependence Kuwait paint pictures of the space found under Arab bourgeois rule for the development of exilic sociality, political organization, and a renaissance of Palestinian culture. We can also see in the soundtrack to Reem's early life the seeds of a later musical trajectory in dynamic aesthetic conversation with national preservation. But to what extent and through what forms did Kuwait enable musical opportunities for Palestinian exiles? How did Palestine figure as an influence in the period after 1967, and just how useful are concepts of cosmopolitanism as frameworks for understanding this experience?

I see the importance of Reem's narrative as showing that colonial exile was productive of a range of musical materials, expressive of Kuwait's position in the U.S. sphere of influence, while simultaneously incorporating the stage and folk arts of Egypt, Lebanon, and—during a period of tentative relations—the Soviet Union. At a grassroots level, Palestinian exiles appropriated a broad palate of sounds transmitted from home and elsewhere. Reem's father was a well-traveled professional, which meant she and her family were exposed to transatlantic pop, jazz, art musics, Egyptian song, Lebanese icon Fairuz, and the Bolshoi Theater, alongside traditional Palestinian song practices led by her mother in the home. Visits to Palestine during summer trips were an “epiphany,” concretizing an interest in wedding songs connected to pre-Nakba oral traditions.<sup>8</sup>

A recurring concept here is the idea that understanding the messages carried by the music is key to finding the social value of transmission for a community separated from their homeland (figure 4). Family ties were



4. Reem Kelani sings at a concert at Qalandiya camp, April 1993. Courtesy the Palestinian Museum.

often key, although it will be seen in following sections that the cast in this soundtrack featured sometimes rather unexpected musical characters. Fairuz is a significant figure in voicing Palestinian narratives, allied to a process whereby women took the lead in the preservation of musical heritage. Reem's parents and a wider community of social figures were fundamental in shaping her idea of what Palestine was. As national consciousness grew, the class leadership of Nadi al-'Ummal (Workers' Club) activists played a heightened role after 1967. In seeking answers to questions of musical space and aesthetics in Kuwait, the chapter looks at the class and gender connotations of traditional weddings seen in Palestine and among exiles in Kuwait, where "cosmopolitan" cultural experiences were grounded by the rising popularity of the national liberation movement.

Stokes suggests that there is a fundamental difference between cosmopolitanism from below and elite notions of musical cross-fertilization,<sup>9</sup> elsewhere situating migrant cosmopolitanism alongside grassroots opposition.<sup>10</sup> Interrogating this notion with reference to a range of contemporary writers, and following the analysis of Al-Nakib, who describes

the Palestinian experience in Kuwait as a “cosmopolitanism betrayed,”<sup>11</sup> I argue that, beyond its use as a descriptive term, cosmopolitanism itself is an unstable and inadequate explanation of the cultural expressions of Palestinian exile, borne out by the temporality of life under a U.S. imperialist-allied monarchy. My conclusions are drawn from Marxist analyses of imperialism and class betrayal in the committed narratives of al-Ali, Kanafani, and Leila Khaled.

Though Reem would remain loyal to Kuwait, the mass expulsions following the outbreak of the 1990 imperialist war were preceded by growing confrontation and a drastically altered Kuwaiti stance on the Palestinian presence. Related to arguments on the instability of cosmopolitanism, my analysis sees a dilemma of loyalty presented by Palestinians who lived in Kuwait during this period, assessing the historical developments through which Palestinian coexistence came to a dead end in Gulf War Kuwait. I suggest that the life and death of Naji al-Ali is analogous to the experience of Palestinian exiles, with his assassination following expulsion from Kuwait emblematic of what the “peace” accords would have in store for broad sections of refugees.

Beginning with an outline of the range of musics to which the exiles were exposed, the first section in this chapter focuses on Fairuz’s musical response to 1967, which represents Reem’s first singing repertoire. Attention then turns to Palestinian weddings, presenting shifting class relationships to Westernization and tradition alongside a reemerging liberation movement. Outlining the position of Kuwait, and particularly its global relationships, I contextualize discussion on the pitfalls of cosmopolitanism before offering reflections on spaces found and lost by the Palestinian exiles.

### ***Tom wa-Jerry, Fairuz, and Kuwait’s Cosmopolitan Palestinians***

God’s glory to the Arab people, most generous land and warmest host  
The dawn has risen and set as your flag is unfurled, oh Kuwait.

—FARID AL-ATRASH, “BISMILLAH YA KUWAIT,” AL-ANDALUS CINEMA THEATER,  
KUWAIT, 1967<sup>12</sup>

Reem was raised by parents displaced from Ya’bad, near Jenin, and Nein, a village near Nazareth, but her upbringing was by no means typical of

refugees in the emirate. In a small community in Sulaibikhat, at that time a fenced-off area of around 200 bungalows from the era of British occupation, the children of Palestinian exiles attended a swimming club, where flip-flops walked to Western pop, Mungo Jerry's "In the Summertime," and "God forbid—Cliff Richard." In later life, Reem bumped into a childhood friend at a concert in Greece: "He joked that I'd swapped the Pepsi bottle for a real microphone." Bootlegged U.S. records cohabitated with Kuwait's *tarwiha siyahiya* (tourist entertainment), which brought Arab orchestras, theater troupes, and Soviet folk ensembles. The blend was unique, but in some ways musical experiences in 1960s Kuwait were not dissimilar to those of other regional population centers, including Beirut, Cairo, and Tehran, for their cross-continental flows of music, film, and other media.<sup>13</sup> On the outskirts of Kuwait City, Palestinian youths appropriated cosmopolitan sounds as their own.

Having read medicine in 1940s Alexandria, Yousef Kelani personified the tastes of the Sulaibikhat exiles for the Golden Age of Egyptian cinema and song.<sup>14</sup> This group of Palestinians was uniquely placed to access regional and international trends in music and performing arts, and had the means to travel and absorb a range of cultural phenomena. Reem says that her father "came back with a bunch of records" and stories of the regional metropolis:

He would sing all the Egyptian black and white films. Great works that were of the generation that came after Sayyid Darwish, so [composers] Mohammad Abdel Wahab, Mohamed al-Qasabgi, and he went gaga over Farid al-Atrash! So my father would be singing all these songs. . . . When you would go to see a film . . . you'd always have Tom and Jerry first. [In child's voice:] "*Tom wa Jerry, Tom wa Jerry!*" So every film you would go and see in Egypt, even if it was by Suad Husni<sup>15</sup> . . . they would always have a clip of Tom and Jerry, with amazing music, you know, all that jazzy stuff they played.

The Arab greats were present figures—composer-oud players al-Atrash and Riyadh Sunbati were feted in Kuwait, which channeled the popularity of Egyptian mass culture—but it was her father's particular interest in U.S. pop and jazz styles that Reem describes as more influential on her. Among early influences, she would mention Billie Holiday, Janis Joplin, and Karen

Carpenter, but said she found Umm Kulthum boring. Reem was, in any case, more attracted to traditional songs than “Arabic music,” she says disparagingly, and came to see the “organic,” “*za’tar wa-zeit*” (thyme and olive oil) practices of her mother’s singing of Palestinian folksongs in the kitchen as hugely significant.

Also working in Algeria and Europe, Yousef’s experience was by no means typical, yet his brand of musical cosmopolitanism pointed to the mobility of a stratum of the population. While Kuwait was “still an autocracy of sheikhs and emirs,” says Reem, her detailing of the cohabitation of U.S. stage, jazz, European and Arab art musics, and Palestinian folk songs highlights a home situation in which all elements combined in the exile environment. With imperialism still a thing of the present, the cultural effects of global power mingled with Arab industry and grassroots tradition.

What Khaled Barakat refers to as the “liberal era” of the Cairo-led Golden Age<sup>16</sup> was jolted vigorously by the reemergence of the question of Palestine, with well-known Nasser-era *mutribin* (*tarab* vocalists) devoting works to the struggle for liberation.<sup>17</sup> If Kanafani had seen the separation of Palestinians from their cause as the greatest crime of Zionism and imperialism,<sup>18</sup> songs written in the wake of Israel’s colonizing war of 1967 sought to reset the balance. Kanafani’s own depiction of the road to Kuwait was of a vast, suffocating wilderness, “like a giant in hiding, flogging their heads with whips of fire,”<sup>19</sup> but Mahmoud Darwish found in the singing of Fairuz “a song which makes the desert smaller,” and in the Rahbani brothers’ compositions a mastery of musical poetry to lead the Palestinians forward.<sup>20</sup>

At a 1967 Dar al-Hanan school concert at age four, Reem sang publicly for the first time,<sup>21</sup> performing “Zahrat al-mada’in” (Flower of the cities), a recently released Fairuz/Rahbani song dedicated to the liberation of Jerusalem:

After a little while everybody was bursting into tears. So I stopped half way and started sobbing. “Mama, they don’t like my singing! They don’t like my voice!” I didn’t realize at the time that they were all shedding tears over the war.

The concert would bring the young vocalist more attention. Kuwaiti TV was filled with images of Palestinian suffering and, from that day onward,



Reem says, she was suddenly in front of the cameras herself, recognized as a gifted child, and “being driven around from one show to another”;<sup>22</sup> in the years to come, other Palestinian singers found a willing audience covering music written in Palestine.<sup>23</sup> The “holy book of Fairuz and Jerusalem” was Reem’s first public repertoire.

The Israeli conquest of Gaza and the West Bank was total in June 1967 and Fairuz premiered the song barely weeks later<sup>24</sup> at the Cedars Festival in the forests north of the Beqaa Valley. The final stanza of “Zahrat al-mada’in” follows mournful lyrics on the fall of the city, its martyrs, refugees, and children without homes, to paint the future in optimistic colors:

This is our home and Jerusalem belongs to us  
And in our hands we will celebrate the splendor of Jerusalem  
By our hands the peace will return to Jerusalem.

Defeat was fresh in the minds of Palestinians in Kuwait and the tremors of Israeli ascendancy would be felt for years to come, but Fairuz’s singing brought hope despite the destruction and mass expulsion.<sup>25</sup> Jerusalem was symbolic of Palestinian dispossession and a prize exalted in Zionist mythology and song.<sup>26</sup>

The Rahbani brothers’ compositions had reached a turning point, described as a more “realistic” narrative,<sup>27</sup> during an intensely productive period characterized by “more overtly political” works inspired by “popular resistance to a tyrannical occupier.”<sup>28</sup> Other choruses of “now, now, and not tomorrow” signaled impatience with Arab passivity and demanded the right of return, promising to match fire with fire.<sup>29</sup> At a time of historic defeat for the Arab nations in the wake of the catastrophic “setback” of 1967, the vision of Jerusalem as objective and goal was placed at the center of this struggle. As Khalili points out, heroic narratives often celebrated the agency of ordinary Palestinian refugees, setting a challenge to apathy or fatalism, and demanding action for self-determination.<sup>30</sup>

The attachment of Fairuz and the Rahbani brothers to the Palestinian cause was such that, Reem says, “We used to think as kids that Fairuz was Palestinian.”<sup>31</sup> She recalls that the school concert and other similar events in 1967 were also fundraisers for the liberation movement. Transmission and presentation became tools of organization, centering the Fairuz/Rahbani narrative of Palestine for audiences searching for

commemorative, political, and emotional outlets after the Naksa. Fairuz had been to Kuwait a year before, in fact, staging music from her 1966 album *Andalusiyat*; both this recording and the subsequent *Jerusalem in my Heart* were produced by Palestinian Sabri al-Sharif, noted for his interest in applying elements of Western harmonic and orchestral thinking into indigenous music.<sup>32</sup> Heard together, material from the two albums highlights contrasting sides to the Rahbani–Sharif approach, recorded either side of the Naksa, and carrying aesthetic meaning in different ways. Material from both albums would continue to be performed in the period that followed.

The 1966 Fairuz production at Kuwait’s al-Andalus Cinema was elaborately staged, bringing the Lebanese Popular Troupe, complete with chorus, over twenty dancers, plus vocalist Nasri Shamseddine, who wore a Palestinian *kuffieh*. Both the album and the Kuwait concert featured “Irja’i ya alf leila” (Return, oh thousand nights), a *muwashshah* with lyrics by Syrian poet Rafiq Khoury. This would be Fairuz’s introduction to the local crowd and it seemed significant that the troupe brought a distant quality to the Gulf, evoking the sounds and sights of times past.<sup>33</sup> Reflecting on this musical imagery, Hongur summarizes:

Her extensive repertoire comprises innumerable songs about romantic love, simple village life, patriotism, comedy, drama, philosophy, and contemporary politics, many of which related to Palestinian nationalism.<sup>34</sup>

Stone questions the legitimacy of “traditional” aspects of Rahbani brothers’ presentations, with Fairuz’s son Ziad Rahbani himself voicing criticism, and expanding on what Stone calls the parody/homage dilemma.<sup>35</sup> There are also disagreements among musicians as to Rahbani claims to be representing “traditional *muwashshahat* and *qasa’id*.”<sup>36</sup> Reem saw elitism in such views and defended the “absolutely real” contributions of the Rahbani *muwashshahat*. For Asmar, the Rahbani brothers’ relationship to tradition was also avant-garde, founding a music style distinct from the Cairo scene’s lengthy songs based on love, or Aleppan *waslat*. Where Stone points to the life of workless celebration at the heart of the villages of Rahbani stage productions, Asmar sees themes of wholesome village life and simplified struggle between good and evil as prioritizing “the glory

of the land” over being duped into supporting “savvy politicians” or warlords.<sup>37</sup>

Indicative of the new aesthetics of Fairuz’s 1967 presentations, the recording of “Zahrat al-mada’in” from which the children learned the song featured church organ and brass (the school housed a small piano); gone were instruments like the *buzuq* and *oud*, heard on *Andalusiyyat*, a year before. Yet material from both albums packed an emotional punch and carried associations for the Palestinian refugees. In the penultimate song of her 1966 concert, video footage shows Fairuz smiling knowingly as the crowd reacts wildly when she sings the title, “Take me and plant me in the land of Lebanon,” prompting two repetitions of the line. For the refugees, ideals of returning to a homeland reached their logical conclusions in later evocations of Jerusalem. Reem says that audience reactions to her performance of Fairuz material gave her a growing awareness of the sensitivities attached to material on Palestine:

And that’s why I could never separate Palestine from performing. . . . The other challenge that this repertoire taught me . . . was how to accommodate emotion and technique at the same time, without letting one compromise the other. . . . Cause everyone laughs about Fairuz, she stands still like a piece of stone, you know. And you’ve seen me live on stage! And not that I would compare myself with someone as great as she is, but I learned that . . . [the songs] make people laugh and cry.

### The Changing Face of Palestinian Weddings

From the late 1960s, Reem attended many Palestinian weddings in Kuwaiti hotels, with DJs spinning love songs from U.S. pop charts, exemplified by the soft rock “Feelings” by Morris Albert,<sup>38</sup> a melodramatic love song that the weddings of middle-class families “had to have.” She knew that “real Palestinian weddings,” with traditional music, dance, and dress took place among the poorer refugees, centered on the Workers’ Club; this type of wedding was disseminated more widely among the exiles as national consciousness gathered pace by the 1980s. The Kelani-Zoabi family traveled to Palestine every two years,<sup>39</sup> and in 1972, at the age of nine, Reem says she attended her first “real” Palestinian wedding.

Initially expecting another hotel wedding and “Feelings,” they soon found out that the whole village of Nein had been invited to the central square. With hundreds present, proceedings were “quasi formal . . . but when the strangers leave, the boys and girls start dancing.” The wedding finale left a lasting impression:

The old men stand up and they close the ceremony with their dance . . . so nontechnical, yet severely profound. So there wasn’t a lot of acrobatics, they were men in their eighties and nineties, but the profundity of it. . . .

And then a male singer came and grabbed the microphone and he started what we call *al-hadi* or *al-hadda*, sung poems, and he just looked at our nuclear family, mum, and dad and sang, “*w salmu ‘ala ahl l-Kuwait; ya halali ya mali . . .*” [and salam to this family from Kuwait . . .] and they started saluting the people who had come from Kuwait. It felt incredible and I was thinking, “I’m not Kuwaiti but I have come from Kuwait.” That old man was like the umbilical cord.<sup>40</sup>

The summer escape to Galilee shaped her understanding of what being Palestinian meant as an exile, that she occupied a dual position as a Palestinian girl in a non-Palestinian environment. But here in Palestine it was a musical experience that completed the circle. McDonald notes that “the Palestinian wedding is perhaps the most powerful social space in which conceptions of nation are defined, redefined, and transmitted,” holding particular significance for exiles driven to preserve their communities.<sup>41</sup> While oral transmission in particular has marked a continuation with weddings in pre-1948 Palestine, the maintenance of Palestinian traditional forms has been spurred on by Zionist colonial violence and the attempted erasure of historic Palestine.<sup>42</sup> Weddings are often themselves sites of repression and resistance, both in Palestine and in exile.<sup>43</sup>

Compared with what Reem had seen in Kuwait, the work of the *zajjal*, or traditional poet-singer, offered new representations of Palestine. In his work on improvised debate in the singing of several poetic genres in Palestinian weddings, Dirgham Sbait describes the “unlimited” choice of themes, ranging from love to politics, and defines the “hadi or hadda (lit. “cameleer singer,” colloquially [as] a poet who sings *hida*, the most

popular genre of Palestinian improvised-sung poetry).<sup>44</sup> The singer's embrace of the Kelani family spoke to principles of *sumud*, a prominent theme in *hida* poetry.<sup>45</sup> The common refrain, "*ya halali, ya mali*," is translated in Sbait's work as, "Oh, how delighted I am!"<sup>46</sup> Alternative translations are "my riches are my own" or "what I have is mine by right."<sup>47</sup>

Viewed this way, these lyrics—and those sung to the Kelani family—are simultaneously proclamations of celebration and statements of national pride and ownership of the riches of the land. When he sang "*ya halali, ya mali*," the vocalist claimed Reem and her group as his own family and encouraged the chorus of attendees to do the same; the refugees were part of the *halal*, the heritage of Palestine. Elsewhere in the Arab world, poets are traditionally held in high esteem for their artistic ability and the depth of their knowledge of genre, and for their contemporary insight.<sup>48</sup> Reem's surprise that the singer knew of the areas in Kuwait where the Palestinian refugees resided offers a parallel. Palestinian *zajjal*in have celebrated the return of resistance fighters,<sup>49</sup> political prisoners, and travelers.<sup>50</sup>

Reem's metaphor of an "umbilical cord" indexes a Palestinian case where images of birth, conception, pregnancy, and reproduction appear through decades of nationalist literature. Metaphorical umbilical cords conjure up villages, displaced populations, and shared histories.<sup>51</sup> Massad sees this process as an opposite pole to Zionist colonialist attempts to "retrieve" the memory of the nation, alongside a drive by Israeli politicians toward "creating geographic simulacra which informs Israeli state policies."<sup>52</sup> Direct references to physical geography suggest that reproductivity is tied to material phenomena and political processes. Rhoda Kanaaneh describes the "nationalization" of reproduction and maternity, with women inscribed as reproducers of the nation in the face of Zionist erasure and marginalization.<sup>53</sup> The role of the *zajjal* in Nein did not invoke birth himself, but Reem's process of recollection evokes a strong link between his intervention and the revelation that she and her group were part of the Palestinian family in Nein, despite living in Kuwait.

Reem's descriptions reveal not only her own developing tastes and career direction but also the renaissance in cultural heritage among Kuwait-based exiles, accompanying the insurrectionary movement of Palestinians in Lebanon and Palestine. Reem reports of "fundraisers left, right, and center," along with growing pride in rural traditions in dress by the 1980s. Middle-class weddings "started having a proper Palestinian

*zaffa*, wedding procession,” and performers appearing regularly at the Workers’ Club gained a generalized appeal. Reem’s narrative of the changes underway in the eighties implies that poorer Palestinians had held traditional weddings since their arrival decades before. As Turino suggests, cosmopolitan cultural practices are revealing of the global interests at play in a given arena.<sup>54</sup> Amid the creeping hardships of political repression and economic ruin that were felt by the Kuwait-based exiles, connections to resurgent resistance in Palestine took on political and cultural forms.

### Kuwait: Barrels, Bullets, and Stateless Exiles

Where was I to go? If I couldn’t bend heaven I would scratch hell;  
Kuwait was the only outlet.

—LEILA KHALED<sup>55</sup>

The modern city-state of Kuwait was itself the product of colonial venture,<sup>56</sup> carved away from Iraq by British politicians in 1921–22, later placing the borders of the new statelet around the world’s biggest oilfield. In the years that followed, Britain competed with rising U.S. imperialism for oil agreements and, by the formal end of British rule in 1961,<sup>57</sup> the Kuwaiti royals’ international relations remained in a state of flux. Despite oil nationalization in 1975, Kuwait remained a weaker player in a cat and mouse game, with rivals to Britain’s established position waiting to pounce.<sup>58</sup> That U.S. supremacy triumphed in this competition was illustrated by Naji al-Ali in February 1980, in a sketch of an Olympic podium of oil barrels, with greedy military figures atop, and France and Britain forced into second and third places.<sup>59</sup> Over the same period, a section of Kuwait’s ruling class had pushed for independence in the economic sphere, and Kuwait became the only Gulf monarchy to develop something approaching neutral relations with the Soviet Union. Kuwait remained a vassal of U.S. interests, but the socialist bloc was also influential on a cultural level, while Cairo dominated the Arab airwaves and U.S. pop augmented the grassroots musics of a majority migrant workforce.

Leila Khaled observed that, during her early 1960s period in the country, Kuwait City was “a cosmopolitan centre,” where some of her Palestinian co-workers lived “hedonistic” consumer lifestyles,<sup>60</sup> hinting at the differential class experiences of the exiles. Written three years after he left

Kuwait, the “fantasy” imagined by Kanafani’s traveling Palestinians in *Men in the Sun* meant a life and death journey just to get there. While some have analyzed the novel’s grim realism as containing gratuitousness,<sup>61</sup> stories of post-Nakba journeys to Kuwait involving grueling twenty-hour treks and ending in death in the desert and wetlands were true.<sup>62</sup> According to his friend Fadle al-Naqib, Kanafani had written the story after hearing news that the bodies of Palestinian migrant workers had been found in Kuwait’s waste disposal site after dying inside the trunk of a car that brought them to the city.<sup>63</sup> It was an unscrupulous paradise, as Abul Khaizuran tells Kanafani’s other characters. “I am glad you are going to Kuwait, because you will learn many things there. The first thing you will learn is: money comes first, and then morals.”<sup>64</sup>

In less than half a century, Kuwait’s population grew to ten times its pre-oil level. A Kuwaiti minority maintained privileges of state welfare and luxurious living associated with the oil boom, while a migrant majority carried out almost all manual labor and a disproportionate amount of white-collar work. Most lived in shanty towns away from the main roads, with an average wage of less than half of the lowest-paid Kuwaitis.<sup>65</sup> By 1970, 140,000 Palestinians made up around a fifth of the population.<sup>66</sup> As Haddad writes, Palestinian laborers, along with migrants from India, Pakistan, and the Arab world, formed the backbone of the Kuwaiti economy, with Palestinian professionals playing key roles in state bureaucracy.<sup>67</sup> Having no chance of naturalization or citizenship, and subject to a strict *kafala* (company sponsorship)<sup>68</sup> system from 1975, Palestinians had no option of returning home if Kuwait revoked their temporary status.

The economic crisis of the 1980s hit Palestinian families hard, with rents skyrocketing and unemployment rising, resulting in collective solidarity when many were forced to move in together.<sup>69</sup> The crash in oil prices came alongside a campaign of “Kuwaitization,” or replacement of non-Kuwaiti workers with nationals, accelerating a drive to monoculturalism.<sup>70</sup> Whereas the state had encouraged the self-appointed Palestinian leaders described by Khaled in the 1960s,<sup>71</sup> and had supported the PLO financially,<sup>72</sup> these donations fell dramatically by the first intifada, when Palestinian protesters faced Kuwaiti police, sparking ruling-class fears of a broader movement.<sup>73</sup>

In 1991, Palestinians in Kuwait suffered mass expulsion on a scale rivaling the 1967 Naksa in its ferocity and impact. With the pretext that the

PLO leadership had supported Iraq's invasion, the U.S.-allied Kuwaiti regime needed little encouragement. Over 400,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced and an estimated 4,000 killed; 16,000 were detained and tortured by Kuwaiti state forces. Barely 70,000 Palestinians remained in Kuwait by the end of 1991.<sup>74</sup> While Abu Manneh places the blame for expulsion directly and solely on Arafat's personal decision to back Saddam Hussein,<sup>75</sup> Kuwait-born Palestinian Toufic Haddad argues that "the price Palestinians were forced to pay had little to do with their alleged crime" and everything to do with the goals of U.S. imperialism for regional dominance and control of "a new unipolar world."<sup>76</sup> El-Najjar sees a rising Palestinian demographic—approaching the numbers of Kuwaitis in the country—as a factor in the emir's "ethnic cleansing" campaign of the war period.<sup>77</sup>

In a June 1987 cartoon of the child witness Handala, al-Ali had posterized a bullet, under a written description:

This bullet refused to be fired against the refugee camps, or participate in internal Palestinian fighting, or in Lebanon's civil war, or in the Gulf war [Iraq-Iran]; this bullet is wanted by all other rifles as a suspect of terrorism.<sup>78</sup>

Wars fueled by imperialism are set against the principled position of opposition at a time when "terrorism," for the imperialists, Zionists, and Kuwaiti royals, meant opposing their war efforts.<sup>79</sup> The 1990 Iraqi intervention in Kuwait was one pretext for a U.S.-British invasion against a government the two countries had recently armed, drawing the whole region into chaos. For the stateless exiles, the memories, music, and livelihoods shaping decades of communal history were uprooted in an instant. Following what Reem sees as an act of betrayal by the Palestinian leadership, her parents "died inside" with their dispersal from Kuwait, which had been "the next best thing to being in Palestine. . . . Kuwait gave us Palestine" and "our own mini-culture."

Kanafani went beyond describing Arab regimes simply as sites of capitalist exploitation, coming to see a global context of imperialist domination and dictatorial bourgeois rule. In the Marxist analysis he developed as a PFLP leader, Kuwait falls into the camp of the monarchist "reactionaries . . . completely connected with the imperialists."<sup>80</sup> While



the analyses of both Kanafani and al-Ali owed something to their observations of Gulf exile, they presented Kuwait's position in the world as fraught with dependency, pointing to its neocolonial relations with the dominant superpower as a context for the suffering of Palestinians and other oppressed workers. Al-Ali was expelled from Kuwait in 1985, having escaped besieged Beirut three years before, though his assassination meant that he did not live long enough to witness the events of 1990–91. During this pre-intifada period, he would prophesize direct U.S. invasion and bourgeois Arab collaboration. Summing up his experience in the country, the cartoonist found a “margin of freedom and democracy,” but saw his expulsion as part of a plot to have him killed—a job less easily done cleanly inside Kuwait.<sup>81</sup>

Al-Ali's drawings often presented anonymous figures representing elite classes, though the strangled emir drawn in the “deadly embrace” of U.S. navy deployment in the Gulf in 1982 bore more than a local resemblance.<sup>82</sup> Yet even in his depictions of nameless Arab leaders, drawn either wearing *hatta* and *i'gal* (*kuffieh* scarf and rope tie) or as bald, overweight clones, the gravity of Naji al-Ali's revolutionary position was ultimately too much to bear for the Kuwaiti rulers and his own life was analogous to Palestinian experience under the emirate. The “margin” and the miniculture enjoyed by other Palestinians would eventually be narrowed out of existence.

### **Palestinian Renaissance and a Cosmopolitanism Betrayed**

Mai Al-Nakib views Kanafani's own presence in Kuwait from 1955 to 1960 as illustrating the early promise of independence-era openness and a “cosmopolitan place soon betrayed and today mostly forgotten” in twenty-first-century Kuwait.<sup>83</sup> Following the arguments of Deleuze on the writer as physician of self and world, Al-Nakib sees in Kanafani's writings on Kuwait a “diagnosis” of what was to follow, describing Kuwait “not as a haven for Palestinians—as was commonly perceived and felt—but, rather, as a place fraught with perils and contradictions that would inevitably make a certain version of life for Palestinians unsustainable in the long run.” The “particular condition” described in Kanafani's texts would apply to all contemporary and future citizens and residents.

The writings of Kanafani show Kuwait as an “inadequate long-term home for the Palestinians—despite its money and opportunities,” according to Al-Nakib.<sup>84</sup> Continuing this analysis, she finds inadequacies in post-Gulf War Kuwait’s many social dichotomies, not least between privileged citizens and migrant workers who, like the Palestinians, lack rights to settle and may be expelled at any moment. She concludes that a central problem is the notion of the Kuwaiti citizen itself. The later analysis of Kanafani, Khaled, and al-Ali, amplifying the class privilege and imperialist clientelism at the heart of the *khaliji* regimes, suggest that only social revolution would have fundamentally changed the course of “postcolonial” Kuwait.

Though the political economy of Kuwait’s position vacillated rather narrowly between successive (British then U.S.) imperialists—or positions 1 and 2 on Naji al-Ali’s oil podium—its musical terrain was less clearly regulated, with local, regional, and global influences finding their ways to the grassroots. Khalili argues, with reference to Kuwait, that port towns are by definition “worldly places,” while raising questions of *sha’bi* cosmopolitanisms’ abilities to survive the onslaught of war and capital.<sup>85</sup> Following these remarks, and given the tendency for social experiences described as cosmopolitan to be betrayed in times of intensified crisis of the imperialist system, I want to question the adequacy of the concept itself for understanding the experiences of Reem and other Palestinian exiles.

Cosmopolitanism serves an almost innumerable list of contexts and theoretical ascriptions, ranging from the descriptive to the proposal that it be seen as a universal system of values. The works of intellectuals from Marx to Arendt and Said are seen as springing from cosmopolitan social conditions, including positions of exile. In the conceptualization of “worldliness” put forward by Said, a cultural positionality to the world is counterposed to a privatized context outside of the realms of human sociality. For Marx and Engels, the “alleged universalism and cosmopolitanism” of the capitalist class is exposed as a smokescreen for narrow bourgeois nationalism.<sup>86</sup> Handcuffed to accumulation at any cost, the ideology of the capitalist state is protectionist, inward-looking despite itself and, in the era of monopoly capital, expressive of interimperialist rivalries and colonialist plunder. Kanafani’s vision of socialism, on the other hand,

counterposes revolutionary creativity to the “distortion” of real democracy witnessed under capitalism.<sup>87</sup>

Despite the driving force of nationally based profiteering at the heart of a “globalized” world,<sup>88</sup> the cosmopolitanism of interconnected societies takes on mass cultural forms, often spontaneously grassroots and outside of the direct control of imperialist and local bourgeois elites. I see this as the rather general context for discussions on what has been termed “cosmopolitanism from below.” A musical example could be seen in the evolution of the *sawt* (voice or sound) genre in Kuwait, which, like Palestinian adoption of orally learnt repertoires, fell outside directly imposed initiatives or formal music education, offering some synchronicity with Stokes’s depiction of a Turkish context, in which migrants also play a decisive, hybridizing role.<sup>89</sup> In the ‘Abbasid era, when Kuwait was ruled from Baghdad, the latter’s mosaic of migrants, slaves, and scholars was the basis of its “enduring strength as a great centre of culture,” writes Sawa.<sup>90</sup>

In the context of modern migrant resistance, Caraus and Paris see the universal values of cosmopolitanism allowing for their reappropriation from below, seeing radical cosmopolitanism as mainly a “contestatory practice and action” from the bottom up, with the potential for transforming society on the basis of “freedom, justice and equality.”<sup>91</sup> Explicit in such contributions is an abstract rejection of nationalism, in which no distinction is made between the nationalisms of the oppressed and the oppressor. Caraus and Paris, for example, reject “methodological nationalism,” by which they mean analyses which see the enduring relevance of nation-states.<sup>92</sup> But what if the nation is denied self-determination? What of the rights of oppressed nations to decolonized borders?

Seeing national frontiers and citizenships as “perhaps the most visible source of inequality and unfreedom,” Ingram admits that a “contestatory” approach offers “no solutions . . . only the prospect of ever renewed struggles for freedom and equality.”<sup>93</sup> The absence of questions of colonial oppression, imperialism, and capitalist exploitation from these examples suggests that abstract visions offer no alternative to the status quo and preclude solidarity with the resistance of nationally oppressed peoples. Ingram’s co-contributors share the opposite priority, with a particular goal of reforming imperialist global policing. Smith, for example, sees responses to “Somalian [sic] pirates” as a model exemplar of cosmopolitan cooperation, highlighting the “principles of cosmopolitan morality” applied to

detainees by NATO-led forces patrolling the waters of East Africa.<sup>94</sup> Where in Kanafani, imperialism is analyzed in Marxist terms as entangling regions of the world, academic versions of “cosmopolitanism from below” often lend a veneer of worldliness to imperial terror.

By contrast, the Palestinian people are both oppressed by colonial dispersal and invent revolutionary alternatives in the adoption of cosmopolitan aesthetics and social organization from below. Positioned as, arguably, the most advanced national liberation struggle of our age, the question of Palestine is curiously absent from the “contestatory” cosmopolitanisms outlined above. Indeed, the idea of “contest” is itself problematic—applied to al-Khalil, Jerusalem, or other cities facing colonialist erasure, many Palestinians reject the idea that they are simply contesting Israel’s violently asserted “right.”

While descriptions of the “translocal” appropriation of global cultural effects certainly have relevance to the artistry of Reem Kelani and other Palestinian musicians, Turino’s broader definition of cosmopolitanism sits uneasily with the position of Palestinians under occupation or in locations of exile where narratives of belonging to Palestine often predominate.<sup>95</sup> Seeing nationalism as emerging *from* cosmopolitanism falls well short in furthering understandings of the colonialism and imperialism that have fueled anticolonial movements.

However cosmopolitan they appear, Palestinian cultural and political formations fall outside the positions discussed. Reem’s narrative of youth combines the community spirit enabled partially by the Fairuz and Rahbani repertoire, and which platformed her own performance practices alongside swimming club life, where “we’d be walking around with ghetto blasters,” her father’s home listening, and Palestinian song. The Rahbanis had brought together traditional instruments, Western and Soviet orchestral sounds, accordions, guitars, and even popular rhythms from Latin America. Taking a cue from the expansive palate over which Fairuz sang to land and liberation, Palestinian musicianship after 1967 would build on styles accessed via radio, recordings, and exposure to exilic soundscapes. This was certainly, in descriptive terms, cosmopolitanism from below. However, the worldliness of the Palestinian music and narrative developed by Reem and others was explicitly national, drawing proudly on the roots of oral tradition, and eventually seeing the incorporation of “global” sounds as enabling contributions to a revolutionary nationalist cause. For

cosmopolitan Palestinian Said, “no culture today is pure.”<sup>96</sup> Again, examples abound in the works of Naji al-Ali. In a 1976 cartoon drawn in the wake of massacre in Lebanon, a sideways-facing Handala stands weeping in a graveyard with clenched fist, blowing a trumpet skywards. An instrument associated with European militarism is expropriated by steadfast youth, as unrecognizable notes flow from his lips.<sup>97</sup>

In light of the critiques of Palestinian Marxists and revolutionaries discussed above, I see Kuwaitization partly as a reaction to the tendency of Palestinian anti-imperialists to organize more independently since 1967. Reem’s recollections confirm that working-class exiles were leading figures in this process, including the Workers’ Club and the Women’s Union, as guardians of wedding-centered performance and poetic traditions, and as key disseminators of national culture in times of revolutionary upheaval. An ending of the honeymoon period of cosmopolitanism and relative comfort for a section of the exiles during the oil boom coincided with a turn to revolutionary nationalist *turath*.

In the case of Reem’s experiences of Kuwait, I wish to make two additional observations. First, the cosmopolitan listening of her childhood in the emirate and her exposure to Palestinian music came to form inseparable parts of her approach, which, while thematically committed to transmitting a pre-Nakba heritage of song, brought in a range of jazz, stage, and regional traditions accessed in Kuwait. Second, however, the betrayal of the cosmopolitan ideal described by Al-Nakib relied on a diversity and openness made impossible by the looming threat of state repression and expulsion. In this sense, cosmopolitanism becomes a conceptual absurdity, ripped from the shared fabric of tangible communities of the masses. However, the description of the Reem Kelani concert in London attests that the musical and historic legacies of struggle and cosmopolitan music making persist with the transmission and reinvention of Palestinian folk heritage. As we will see in the next chapter, refugees in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon navigated historic upheavals by wielding contrasting national and transregional influences.

### Conclusions: Music in the Margins

I was sitting in ‘Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp and this lovely refugee woman said, in Arabic, “What’s your name, praise be to the Prophet?”

And I said, “My name is Reem” [which translates as “gazelle”]. And she said, “Ah, I’ve got a song for you,” and I said, “Okay mother, let’s hear it.” And she sang,

Oh gazelle of all gazelles  
 I cried over our parting  
 And I’ll continue to cry over our parting  
 I’ve taken a vow of silence  
 I’ve forbidden myself from dancing the *dabke*  
 I dyed my clothes dark, and I’ve gone into mourning

And I said, “Nice. When do you sing these songs, mother?” And she said, “We’re Palestinian. At weddings, of course.” [Audience laughter]<sup>98</sup>

It was a story Reem had told before and one which seems to define much of her philosophy on music and being Palestinian. The camp visit was in 1999, during which she also wrote of her experiences with singing women at Burj al-Barajneh refugee camp in southern Beirut. Again hearing refrains of “*ya halali ya mali*,” Reem’s dispatch ends optimistically: “People like Umm Muhammad [a refugee singer] make me believe in the possibility of regaining our *halal*.”<sup>99</sup> The darkness of the lyrics on loss and suffering gives way to celebration in performance—in liner notes to the song “Sprinting Gazelle,” Reem sees this as the essence of *sumud*: “a profound pain interlaced with ecstatic hope.”<sup>100</sup>

In Kuwait’s changing post-1967 context, women came to play a more public role in the transmission and dissemination of Palestinian narratives, with music and culture again becoming important tools in collective organization. There is inevitable emphasis here on the enhanced position of Fairuz as an enduring narrator of Palestinian narratives of resistance and *sumud* in the wake of the Naksa. Reem reports that she “grew out of” Fairuz, yet young vocalist Nai Barghouti expresses the belief that age brings a deeper understanding of the importance of this repertoire.<sup>101</sup> The context of hope despite the loss of swathes of historic Palestine was mediated through Fairuz’s embrace as “a Palestinian” despite her Lebanese nationality.

That women are central figures in *sumud* is a recurring theme in this book. Here we see that Reem and her mother take on roles of guardians

of both the transmission of folksong and the idea that this singing is “natural,” or “*za‘tar wa-zeit*,” referencing pre-Nakba Palestine, its rural abundance, and, implicitly, its potential after liberation. Seen in this way, Reem’s dedication to what existed before “the original sin” of 1948 is given concreteness that belies representations of this poetic material—and the Rahbani brothers’ compositions—as fundamentally nostalgic.

Reem’s childhood listening spoke to Kuwait’s place in the world and region but, as shown in the changes witnessed in Palestinian weddings, the cosmopolitan sounds of “global” transmission would come to share a local stage with national Palestinian performance traditions. Leaders in this process centrally include women and working-class refugees. Continuing to recognize this key grassroots role, Reem’s performing career would draw heavily on material learned from women refugees in Lebanon, which points to the endurance of Bilad al-Sham as a center of exile and Palestinian culture, as the next chapter will show. The jazz, stage, and wider musical influences on her arrangements of these traditions hark back to her experiences in Kuwait, to short visits to Palestine, and to refugees in Bilad al-Sham.

As a descriptor of Kuwait-based musical-performance exposure, cosmopolitanism would appear unproblematic, but I have questioned its adequacy as a conceptual framework, with Palestine falling outside of many “alternative” visions. That resistance rejects ascription of an equal-sided contestation is further shown in Reem’s performance principles, refusing to be a “token Palestinian,” alongside Israeli artists brought “to justify my presence.” The theories discussed often reject the national, making no distinction between progressive, anticolonial nationalisms and their opposites. The example of Palestinians in Kuwait shows a gravitation toward national renaissance alongside a rising national liberation movement.

With winds of resistance blowing strongly from Palestine by the 1980s, a revivalist spirit linked music and dance to liberating the land: this activist space gave Reem a musical language to articulate Palestinian musical heritage. Kuwait offered the opportunity to perform as Palestinians after 1967, as exemplified by Reem’s young concerts and TV appearances, but Palestinians were destined to fall foul of Kuwait’s closing relationship with U.S. imperialism. Al-Ali’s depiction of the “margins” of existence, set alongside his and Kanafani’s biting analyses of Arab bourgeoisies, suggests metaphors on his own life and death. His assassination parallels

the refugees left out of the Oslo agreements, relegated to never-to-transpire final status negotiations, assassinated politically.<sup>102</sup> The notion of a fleeting time and space for cosmopolitan culture and social expression is a feature of more than one location of Palestinian displacement featured in this book, some whose sun has set, while others endure. Or maybe what seemed to be an end was just a beginning.



## CHAPTER 2

# "Nothing Stops Tradition": Dialects of Cultural Reinvention in Exile

### Experiences of Palestinian Instrumentalism in Bilad al-Sham

When Ahmad Al Khatib returned to Ramallah, nobody in the family was surprised, least of all his mother. Proudly seeing in her son “a very strong sense of being Palestinian,” Umm Tareq had a Jordanian father and maternal roots in Nablus, and had brought up her children in the refugee camp in Irbid, northern Jordan, in the 1970s. Many in the camp had been neighbors in adjacent villages in Palestine prior to their expulsion in 1948, and they brought traditions in cooking, song, and *lahja* (pl. *lahajat*, accents or dialects). There were reminders everywhere, says Ahmad:

You're there because you are Palestinian and on every wall you see the flag or maps or words from Palestinian poetry or political statements. So living in the camp makes you aware of your identity, of who you are. And Palestine has this poetic imagination, almost like a utopia.<sup>1</sup>

Going back to Palestine was a culture shock, not limited to the expectations of a young man who had grown up around the stories of older refugees. An accomplished *oud* player, Ahmad also came up against unexpected reactions to his music, with West Bank musicians and music experts perplexed by his strongly Iraqi-influenced style of playing. His early *oud* teacher had been Ahmed Abdel Qasim, a Palestinian who grew up in a Baghdad refugee camp and “speaks in an Iraqi dialect.” With their stronger links to Syrian and Egyptian *maqam* traditions, Ahmad found that the local Palestinians were “really opposed” to his advocacy of the Iraqi

school, seeing the introduction of harmonic ideas as “polluting” the authentic soul of their vision of Arab music. They would jokingly refer to him as an “Iraqi-Palestinian musician,” and they took some convincing that he was capable of performing in the favored Egyptian style.

On the other side, Ahmad remembers *ustadh* Abdel Qasim having a similar reaction when, as his young *oud* student, he tried some moves from Egyptian virtuoso Farid al-Atrash: “No, don’t listen to this bullshit. It’s not music!” Since this 1998 journey to Palestine, the work of Iraqi *oud* pioneers including Jamil and Munir Bashir has grown in appeal. Though the “split” between regional schools lives on in some quarters, the Iraqi *lahja* has gained acceptance as one of many modes of Palestinian musical expression.

### Musical *Lahajat* of the Near Exile

Most of the Palestinian people do not live in Palestine; they are languishing in the refugee camps of Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere, with little to expect from the “peace process” or from their own leadership, which has simply abandoned them.

—EDWARD SAID, OCTOBER 1, 1995<sup>2</sup>

I was still faced with some problems, and in order to deal with these problems, I had to learn certain things from the beginning, as a child learns the alphabet. And what an alphabet it was, more taxing to the mind than cuneiform or hieroglyphics.

—JABRA IBRAHIM JABRA<sup>3</sup>

In the wake of the Arab defeat in 1967, Ghassan Kanafani called for the reorganization of the Palestinian revolution and Arab anti-imperialism,<sup>4</sup> seeing the “critical spirit” and “indispensable constructive capacity” of the people as a way out of the crisis. Looking to Lebanon as an arena for reorganizing resistance after the movement’s expulsion from Jordan, he called for a “movement of healthy discussion . . . capable of absorbing and expressing the hidden potential of the people.” This renewed drive would combat a “lore of blind language” promoted by the privileged classes and reflected in a state of impasse. For Kanafani and Palestinian Marxists,

finding solutions meant reenergized party activism, strategies for understanding social dynamics, and the development of “an alternative form that would replace the traditional ones that it has rejected.” Repeatedly referencing the circulation of blood within a body, this analysis evoked the component parts of regional Palestinian exile of which Bilad al-Sham<sup>5</sup>—Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine—formed the main theater of action. Connecting corporeal experience with the cultural struggle for a new language, Kanafani highlighted “enterprise and imagination and invention” as the key to building anew.

This chapter comprises three distinct Palestinian experiences: the youth musicianship of *oud* maestro Ahmad Al Khatib, born in 1974 in the Palestinian refugee camp of Irbid; the guitar-based performance of Tareq Salhia, born in Damascus in 1973; and three bagpipers, Ziad Hbouss Ali, Mustapha Dakhloul, and Bahaa Joumaa, born between 1988 and 1998 in Borj el-Shemali camp, South Lebanon. The key questions of this chapter revolve around musical language, and assess the meaningful associations of genre and tradition in the context of differing Palestinian refugee experiences of Bilad al-Sham. Following the call of Kanafani for “new blood,” I consider the implications of applying to music his concepts of “hidden potential” in collective imagination and resistance, and of developing new social dialects in places of displacement and crisis.<sup>6</sup> Through analysis of three distinct experiences of the region, its history, and spaces for Palestinian performance, I ask what is represented by musical *lahajat*/dialects adopted by Palestinian musicians. What are the sociocommunal spaces through which musical aesthetics are developed? And how do economic and political crises shape musical redefinitions of tradition in Palestinian refugee contexts?

I see *lahja* as a loose frame for examining the collective responses of the musicians to historic periods rocked by Black September, Phalangist massacres, Israeli invasions, and Arab Springs, viewing musical instrumentalism through the reinvention and reinscription of regional sounds and recording the lived experiences of Palestinian performers and fighters. The concept of musical tradition in concentrated areas of Palestinian exile is analyzed through social attachments to aesthetic form, on the one hand, and varying relationships to nationhood in exile, on the other. Arguing that musical language both responds to and challenges conditions of colonial displacement, I analyze the musicians’ approaches as arising

collectively from sociomusical developments of recent decades in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Far from seeing the histories of these locations as a past phase in the Palestinian struggle, I see the performers as contributing to redefining national and revolutionary modes of expression in times of historic rupture.

Ahmad, Tareq, and the *shabab* share general experiences: all of the musicians have family roots in northern Palestine and grew up in refugee families, facing resultant restrictions on travel, work, and citizenship. All lived through periods of war or extreme social upheaval. And all became involved in music from an early age, with an element of chance to their choice of instrument and musical tradition. In their places of living and performing, all of the musicians openly express their Palestinian roots and share views on the right of return.

Within these generalities appear differences of exposure, learning, and musicopolitical pathways, linked to the pulsations of regional history and to particular conditions of time, place, and opportunity. As Said reminds us, language is “a highly organized and encoded system which employs many devices,” with expressions informed by cultural-political environments and institutions.<sup>7</sup> Although musically all of the contributors to this chapter perform *maqam*-oriented repertoire, they have entered into distinct strands of tradition and exhibit contrasting approaches to preservation, invention, and musical language: Al Khatib builds on “Iraqi school” training as a composer and virtuoso performer in his own right, looking to maintain and expand *maqam* tradition; Salhia develops a novel approach to *sharqi* (Eastern) guitar playing and interpretations of art music repertoires; and youths Ziad, Mustapha, and Bahaa perform nationalist and heritage-based song on the *girab* (bagpipes) in camp ensembles. Their careers are at different stages and present a range of exposure through local and international performance spaces, from high-level studio and concert renown to street playing, low-paid function work, and formal and informal positions in teaching and artistic training.

Though they are often painfully connected, recent and post-Nakba histories of Bilad al-Sham reflect contrasting positions toward Palestinian refugee communities, under ruling ideologies ranging from permissive to draconian, encompassing moments of space amidst social control. Policies toward Palestinian expression are never quite settled, much like the refugees themselves. Official political and social views of Palestinian

struggle and the musicians' closeness or distance to organized nationalist struggle also differ by period and location. While Al Khatib began to perform in a camp under Jordanian military siege, for example, and the *shabab* of Borj el-Shemali witnessed Zionist bombings and guerrilla warfare as children, the periods of active musicianship for those covered here sometimes give the false appearance of Palestinians being left to their own devices. However, their communities continue to be at the center of contemporary developments, enduring their position as disenfranchised minorities in the midst of economic crisis, a war-hit Damascus economy, and, in Lebanon, racist hostility from sectarian forces.

The musical and experiential similarities and contrasts outlined above and detailed in the ethnographic sections below indicate why the stories of this group of musicians should be included together. Generational and locational questions, communal spaces, and musical *lahajat* enveloped in their narratives are expressive of the unities, junctures, and fissures faced in the near-*ghurba*, shaping representations of Palestine in colonial exile. By shedding new light on varied Palestinian existence in Bilad al-Sham, this work supposes that the legacies of the Nakba among those scattered nearest to Palestine have heightened relevance to the present and future of many others, confederated as displaced Palestinians with no durable long-term position in the camps and cities in which they reside. Speaking back against the legacy of Sykes-Picot, the stories of this chapter are suggestive of how language, *maqam*, and musical messages are expressed in a region bound by collective history.

The next section conceptualizes Bilad al-Sham as a central theater in Palestinian narrative history, situating the events of recent decades within a materialist analysis of the shifting movements in culture and resistance among the refugee masses, and summarizing the approaches of regional ruling classes toward the Palestinian presence. Three ethnographic sections detail the musical and sociohistorical spaces negotiated by the musicians and the aesthetic forms thrown up in each location. Returning to the question of *lahja*, a subsequent section outlines a sociolinguistic approach for understanding Palestinian musicianship within the context of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, examining recent culturally based academic contributions on events in the Arab world. Seeing the academic embrace of a cultural "Arab Spring" as problematic in terms of linked interventionist agendas, I reflect on the significance of Kanafani's proposals, seeing

*lahja musiqiya* (pl. *lahajat*; musical dialect) as a politicized tool for representing Palestinian collectivity in times of acute crisis.

### The Centrality of Bilad al-Sham

Something had to be done; first of all, to tell the world that we were not going to be put on the shelf for the second time, and secondly to tell the world that the days when the US and reactionary Arabs could dictate to our people were over. Moreover, there was the question of the morale, the fighting ability, of our own people. We could not let things remain like that when a massacre was on the way, even if we had sat down quietly on the steps of His Majesty's palace, and kissed his hand.

—GHASSAN KANAFANI, JUNE 1, 1971<sup>8</sup>

Spoken at a time of life-or-death confrontation with the Jordanian state, and defiantly asserting the existence of the Palestinian liberation movement as a rising force, Kanafani's words are rich in associative meaning, voicing in Marxist terms the depths of frustration felt by millions of refugees in the countries surrounding the Palestinian homeland. In the post-Oslo context these sentiments are echoed by Said, who described refugees "languishing" in exile, as second-class noncitizens. The countries of Bilad al-Sham remained parts of a collective story and Said continually mentioned Palestinians living in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan in one breath, attacking Arafat and the PLO leadership for relegating their rights in favor of their own privileges and lamenting his own inability to visit them.

Palestinian musician and socialite Wasif Jawhariyyeh took part in 1922 protests in Jerusalem against the Balfour Declaration, chronicling the "Arabs' rejection of the Balfour Declaration and their commitment to Syrian unity."<sup>9</sup> Renowned rebel fighters such as Sheikh al-Qassam and Fawzi al-Din al-Qawuqji hailed from Syria, were leading figures in the 1936–39 revolution in Palestine, and were memorialized in poetry and song for their efforts. By far the most populous locations of Palestinian displacement, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria responded in different ways to Palestinian dispersal across Bilad al-Sham.

Though Jordan has been described as the "heart of the diaspora,"<sup>10</sup> the suppression of Nakba commemoration—and later, Land Day—was a key priority of the Hashemite state, with surveillance and control enforced at

key historic moments, intensifying with the loss of its pre-1967 occupation of the West Bank. The kingdom's role as post-Nakba ruler had been planned in back-channel agreements with the colonialist Jewish Agency before 1948.<sup>11</sup> Palestinians "accumulated a society"<sup>12</sup> largely outside of the camps, with some sustaining privileges, including the ability to visit Palestine, but the disarming of Palestinians and banning of political parties culminated in periodic crackdowns on Palestinian organizing. Most notoriously, Black September 1970 saw a thirteen-day confrontation between the liberation movement and the Jordanian state resulted in around 3,400 Palestinian deaths<sup>13</sup> and the expulsion of around 20,000 more. Implementing arrests,<sup>14</sup> torture,<sup>15</sup> the execution of activists, and collaborating with the Israeli border regime accompanied an official policy of Jordanization, discussed below in terms of its linguistic connotations. Linked to the repressive situation described by Ahmad Al Khatib in this chapter, the 1987 Nationality Law attacked the rights of nonnaturalized Jordanians to hold public position, following protests in which the state killed unarmed student protesters.

In terms of socioeconomic acceptance, Palestinians in Lebanon, the majority in camps, face the worst conditions, with fewer rights than migrants in Western countries.<sup>16</sup> Banned from unionized jobs, forcing many into low-paid, unskilled labor,<sup>17</sup> the refugees have historically faced the hammer and anvil of localized hostility of nonstate fascist actors and full-scale military intervention by the Zionist state. The latter's murderous invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, which it saw as safeguarding its West Bank occupation,<sup>18</sup> led to the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, continuing a pattern of massacres and interventions,<sup>19</sup> in which it collaborated with Phalangist proxies to terrorize civilian refugees into abandoning support for resistance. The 2000 and 2006 victories of Hizbullah and allied forces over Zionist occupation and invasion were significant and provide a partial context for more recent Israeli moves against Syria, of which it continues to occupy the Golan Heights.

Sayigh writes in 1979: "In Syria, the most Arab nationalist of the three host countries, Palestinians were allowed equal rights with Syrian citizens, while keeping their own identity."<sup>20</sup> Working in Syria does not involve work permits for Palestinians and, unlike other Bilad al-Sham countries, the state "actively encouraged the Palestinians by giving them training facilities and arms."<sup>21</sup> The repressive apparatus of the Lebanese *deuxieme*

*bureau* and the Jordanian *mukhabarat* (or secret police forces) were notorious, though Syrian involvement in wartime Lebanon by no means covered it in glory.<sup>22</sup> Yet Palestinians “enjoy relatively similar rights as Syrian citizens,” are well integrated, and can join unions and receive scholarships.<sup>23</sup> Unlike Jordan and Lebanon, Syria has adopted an official policy of solidarity with Palestinian liberation, which has implications for its cultural policy. In the context of competing visions of modernity and tradition, Salamandra remarks that it is “far from clear” which socioeconomic group dominates various social spheres in Damascus, suggesting that cultural power is diffuse.<sup>24</sup> Unlike in Lebanon, most Palestinian refugees live outside of the camps in Syria. Although many left the largest camp at Yarmouk, Damascus, during the post-2011 crisis,<sup>25</sup> the majority of refugees and their families have remained within Syria.<sup>26</sup>

Following the Nakba, Palestinian expressions of music and culture in Bilad al-Sham corresponded to state policies, ruling ideologies on culture, war, and resistance, and the impact of regional and international events, not to mention the relative class privilege or disadvantage of the artists. Alongside the nationalization of music practices, writes Boulos:

[Sabri] Al-Sharif and [Halim] al-Rumi in Lebanon, [Rawhi] al-Khammash in Iraq, [Riyad] al-Bandak in Syria, and [Jamil] al-‘As in Jordan all took advantage of their positions and launched a renaissance of music-making throughout al-Mashriq.<sup>27</sup>

In the period of Palestinian revolution from the 1960s, new forms of performance converged with a renewal of traditional folkloric music, dance, and dress. PLO radio operated from Lebanon after the Jordanian expulsion of 1971 and transmitted nationalist songs alongside political pronouncements. In a more mainstream sense, prominent musicians such as Fairuz and the Rahbani family gave voice to pro-Palestine sentiment, as shown in chapter 1. A new music scene emerged in the wake of the West Bank’s Jordanian period. Before 1967, acts had been given platforms if they praised the Amman royals,<sup>28</sup> yet, as we will see in this chapter, broad sections of Palestinian and revolutionary leftist expression in Jordan would be forced underground. The opposite was true in Syria, where al-Ashiqeen were<sup>29</sup> feted on state TV and provided with facilities to record and distribute, with cassettes reaching many in Palestine.



Outside officially provided spaces and open displays of Palestinian culture, the camps and urban centers served as incubators of oral transmission of family origins and village histories and of liberationist discourse.<sup>30</sup> Bilad al-Sham served as a breeding ground for Kanafani's own committed form of artistry: he grew up in Syria and would write and organize in all three countries. Other key cultural figures included Palestinian writer Samira 'Azzam, cartoonist Naji al-Ali, and artist Ismail Shammout, who all spent time in Lebanon. The countries were themselves part of the narrative as stubborn platforms for launching a movement to liberate Palestine and for developing alliances in cultural production.

The emergence in Bilad al-Sham of distinct Palestinian dialects and political demands through music and art coincided with the urgency transmitted by the national liberation struggle, throwing bands like al-Ashiqeen and Baladna<sup>31</sup> into grassroots popularity. Drawing on past forms and re-inventing tradition, musicians responded indirectly to Kanafani's 1968 critique of the language of defeat and call for "new blood."

### **Escaping Jordanization through Music: Ahmad Al Khatib and the Palestinian *Oud***

You are supposed to feel loyal to Jordan, while the Jordanian government sees your devotion to Palestine as your main identity, and you are therefore an unfaithful citizen. You have to prove it 1000 percent more. You can easily be thrown out of discussions on corruption, etc., on the basis you are foreign, you are Palestinian. I don't see this dilemma for Palestinians anywhere else in the world. It is unique to Jordan.

When the Writers' Union was banned, the meetings were held in secret. We still played. . . . And maybe it was better for me because it gave me the opportunity to play acoustically, in a more focused environment. It gave me the duty that if I learned a piece, I had to perform it. I see this as my approach to music today.

As a child in Irbid refugee camp, Ahmad did not feel as streetwise as others his age. Beginning *oud* lessons at age eleven, he poured himself into music, feverishly practicing material learned from his teacher. "In the winter I could sit for ten to fifteen hours a day," after summer lessons when *ustadh* Ahmed Abdel Qasim came from Iraq: "As a result, I was weak in the street!"

Conversely, his earlier memories of wanting to be a musician were inspired by the neighborhood games of other refugee children. Ahmad credits his sister Abeer as “the reason I became a musician . . . she would organize music festivals as a street game with other kids in the camp.” Seeing Palestine “on every wall,” cultural activities were “like a tool of social bridging” for the camp “family” of which his household was part.

Ahmad’s first performances highlighted the role of music in the organized exile politics of post-1967 Irbid. His father was “very active” in the city, as a writer, poet, and activist in the Writers’ Union, which held weekly gatherings featuring poetry recitals and Ahmad’s *oud* playing. The intense practice regime he adopted highlighted the need to “update and play new pieces,” at meetings with a regular attendance. At the same time, says Ahmad, this was a “dark period,” with his father and comrades facing direct repression:

Some of his friends were tortured. Their whole life activities were stopped. Palestine was mentioned in their poetry and the Jordanians didn’t want this.

Echoing stories reported elsewhere,<sup>32</sup> Ahmad’s uncle was an artillery officer in the Jordanian army and refused orders to fire on the camp. After fleeing to join the PLO in Lebanon, he was convicted by a military court and, in his absence, sentenced to death for treason. For the Palestinians, the official policy of Jordanization had previously meant the annexation of the West Bank. Israeli colonization in 1967 brought internal suppression of Palestinian identity to a boiling point under both regimes; though some collaborated, Palestinians in Jordan fiercely resisted de-Palestinianization. Spoken language began to evolve away from Pan-Arabist terminology toward PLO-linked liberationist discourse and revolutionary phraseology.<sup>33</sup> In Irbid, things came to a head with the banning of the union after the Land Day protests of 1986: “The Jordanian government decided to send the army to impose a curfew and accused the intellectuals of the city of being part of the uprising.” Meetings would be held in secret and bans on public gatherings were still in place when Ahmad was a student a decade later.

The list of the union’s visiting poets was impressive—Ahmad played *oud* for Iraqis Abdel Wahab al-Bayati and Abdul Razaq Abdul Wahid, and

Palestinian-Iraqi Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. The context of the gatherings spoke to widespread poverty and disaffection with Jordanian state policy. Irbid had been a center of resistance to British imperialism<sup>34</sup> but the royalist government had seen to it that Palestinians were disarmed after the Nakba.<sup>35</sup> The camps were overcrowded and, compared with Jordanian areas, were “poorest in terms of housing, services, facilities and planning.”<sup>36</sup> In this climate, the Writers’ Union formed part of a Palestinian intelligentsia who were themselves refugees, operating outside the “‘politics of notables’ and dignitaries” seen by Masalha in Jordan;<sup>37</sup> they lived and worked among the masses and faced the sharp end of state repression. In a politicized space, the union formed a *sammi’a*, or group of “diehard,” cultivated listeners, to borrow Racy’s conceptualization of *tarab* culture.<sup>38</sup> Ahmad describes a cadre of attendees who “knew what [*maqam*] *rast* or *nahawand* were, or the meaning of *taqasim* . . . the average knowledge of *maqam* and musical structure compared to today was very high.”

Ahmad depicts himself as a blank canvas for Abdel Qasim to teach:

I assumed that what he taught me was the standard repertoire for *oud*, but actually later on I realized that he had come from the Iraqi tradition and Munir Bashir; nobody knew Munir Bashir at that time in the 1980s, but for me it was standard. So I learned Munir Bashir, Jamil Bashir, the Iraqi solo *oud* repertoire, and not much of the Egyptian repertoire.

Among union supporters, Ahmad’s developing style found acceptance, encouragement, and an audience with critical ears. Many of the activist-poets were linked to either the *hurufiya* aesthetic movement, known for combining Arab nationalist modernities with Islamic heritage, or to the Marxist-linked *al-shi’r al-hurr* (free verse) trend, which sought liberation from the constraints of tradition.<sup>39</sup>

With Abdel Qasim’s training, Ahmad would play either as a soloist or perform *oud* to accompany poetry. Compared with his report of going to Palestine later on, our discussions gave no sense that the listeners were shocked by his adoption of an Iraqi style. Where Khaled Jubran argues that Egyptian and Syrian TV came to shape musical pathways in Palestine (chapter 4), Iraq was closer geographically to Jordan; in any case, Ahmad recalls that in his childhood there was only one shared television in Irbid camp. Although many in the crowd had Iraqi links, his father was also an

amateur *oud* player and did not push his own tastes on Ahmad, which involved “simple *oud* music, Umm Kulthum or Abdel Halim, and the singers of the ’60s and ’70s.”

The militarized Jordanization policy had an impact on the way Ahmad experienced the social organization of music, and on the musical *lahja* he adopted. By forcing the union *jalsat* (literally, “sittings”) to take place underground, the situation incubated his progress as an *oud* player, and forums of Palestinian political and cultural organizing became part of his training program. It was in this environment that Ahmad solidified the teachings of his “Iraqi” Palestinian *ustadh*. Abdel Qasim had trained with the Bashir generation at the Baghdad conservatoire, including Jamil Bashir, whose published *oud* methods contain many of the techniques associated with the Iraqi school, including arpeggios, double and triple stops, and playing higher notes above second position on the neck.<sup>40</sup> The written and performed work of the Bashir brothers, Palestinian Rawhi al-Khammash,<sup>41</sup> and later Iraqi players like Khaled Mohammad Ali, with whom Ahmad came to work, also featured the revival of *maqamat* (plural of *maqam*) associated with past phases in music, while simultaneously expanding instrumental technique, emerging alongside the new movements in poetry in mid-twentieth-century Iraq, which also made their way to Irbid.

A detailed discussion of the origins of Iraqi *oud* playing probably falls outside the scope of this work. While several of its proponents see double stops and other techniques as forming a lost link with Abbasid-era Baghdad<sup>42</sup>—finding evidence in the ninth-century treatises of al-Kindi or finding authenticity in Bashir compared to the “foreign substances” seen in contemporary composition<sup>43</sup>—others are unconvinced. Scholar George Sawa points out, for example, that although al-Kindi detailed one exercise using two simultaneous notes, this was not a common practice.<sup>44</sup> Ahmad does not advocate this link and is keen to stress that “I don’t treat music like a museum,” adding:

I prefer not to treat *maqam* in a historical way. How can we use it? It is almost like a vocabulary. We don’t really speak in historical language or in directly regional language. We try to see it as an art form.

Still under Abdel Qasim’s wing in the early 1990s, Ahmad began to compose his own music. Written while the *jalsat* still took place in secret, his



5. Ahmad Al Khatib.  
Courtesy of Medigrecian  
Productions.

“Sama’i ghufuran” was a barometer of his progress so far and was featured over a decade later on his 2005 debut album, *Sada*, and at concerts over the next decade.<sup>45</sup> There were adventurous rhythmic and melodic phrases in “Ghufran” (literally, “atonement,” “confession,” or “forgiveness”), suggesting that the critical environment in which Ahmad learned and performed was welcoming of innovations in music as well as poetry.

Many *sama’iyat* carry close similarities,<sup>46</sup> and here the *taslim* (or refrain section) closes with a phrase almost identical to the beginning of the *taslim* in “Sama’i nahawand” composed by Mesut Cemil, this time resolving in ‘*qjam*’ tonality. A Turk, Cemil had been a participant at the Cairo Congress in 1932 and his *sama’i* provided a model for Jamil Bashir’s own “Sama’i nahawand” in 1957. Both were performed by Bashir,<sup>47</sup> and were likely sources of inspiration for Ahmad, via Abdel Qasim. In Ahmad’s early work, ambiguous phrases hint at different *maqamat* (*hijaz* and *saba* on the third

degree, *nahawand* on the fifth, and shades of *hijaz-kar* around the seventh), offering a restless quality. The final or fourth section or *khana*, typically featuring a rhythmic mode other than the 10/8 *sama'i thaqil*, is closer to Cemil's triple rhythm, adding tenets of the Bashir technique, with double stops and falling arpeggios.

Compared with "Sama'i ghufran," Ahmad's later compositions would take in developing techniques and his scholarship of Palestinian and other traditions, within a performance mode where his Iraqi training remained a frame of reference. The "Sama'i" recorded in 2017 was composed in *maqam bayat*, not prolifically performed by leading Iraqi players<sup>48</sup> but used in Iraqi folksong and in Palestine, where it underpins hundreds of traditional melodies. Ahmad's choice of *maqam* may reference his time in Palestine, yet several stylistic features of the Iraqi school of *oud* can be found in the piece. These include broken thirds (*taslim* section); performing high up on the neck, well away from the standard first position (second *khana*; chord-like playing<sup>49</sup> (third *khana*) and 9/8 rhythms (fourth *khana*). The last variation is unusual, and referenced a noted innovation of al-Khammash in expanding the rhythmic vocabulary of the *sama'i*'s final section.<sup>50</sup>

As a professional musician and leading *ustadh*, Ahmad has long graduated from any "school," Iraqi or otherwise; colleagues refer to him as having mastered a "world school of *maqam*."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, his compositional output features techniques learned from multiple traditions, and his repertoire includes Turkish and occasionally Egyptian pieces;<sup>52</sup> he also trained classically as a cellist at Yarmouk University in the mid-1990s and writes regularly for strings from his Swedish base. Yet the influence of his Baghdad-educated Palestinian mentor can still be strongly felt in his performance practice. The 2005 *Sada* album began with the piece "Furatain" (Two rivers), subtitled "From Jerusalem to Baghdad," paying tribute to the Bashirs as his "predecessors." Compositions like "Ghurba" (Diaspora)<sup>53</sup>—composed in Europe as the Zionist state rejected his attempts to return to teaching in the West Bank—or the epic "Suznak Rhapsody" incorporate new stylistic and technical devices. Ahmad would perform Jamil Bashir composition "Ayyam zaman" at the 2009 International Early Music Festival in Estonia; and "Andalus" by Baghdad-trained Salem Abdul-Karem in a 2020 video.

Ahmad's experience of music in Irbid was a social journey, taking place in the milieu of Jordanian repression of a vocal Palestinian organization.

Amid the brutality of the state crackdown, generations of Palestinian and Arab comrades pulled together, in scenes reminiscent of the “guest house” tradition that Slyomovics describes as having been brought to Irbid camp from Palestine, taking over “myriad social activities once held elsewhere.”<sup>54</sup> Ahmad remembers this tense environment stretching into the 1990s:

There were no public activities, no theatre. When I was at the university, it was almost like Coronavirus time, with gatherings of more than five people banned; the security forces would immediately come over to break it up. In the arts academy, it wasn’t allowed to have live music outside because they felt any gathering could turn into a demonstration, so we went to university in empty streets. . . . There were some casualties and interrogations.

In the confines of the camp, concepts of poetic *lahja* and liberationist voicings of Palestinian exile experience spoke to radical developments outside the walls of local siege, with histories of regional anticolonial and leftist struggle present in the underground gatherings. The literary activists of Iraq, earlier a capital of Marxist organizing,<sup>55</sup> found musical counterparts. On reflection, as a performing adult, Ahmad links this Iraq-centric transmission to finding “no *maqam* tradition in Palestine.” In pre-Nakba Palestine Nader Jalal confirms that most *oud* playing was carried on in households rather than professionally.<sup>56</sup> Abdel Qasim was Palestinian and received *maqam* training in exile in Baghdad, transmitting this “Iraqi” musical language to Ahmad. In the Irbid camp environment, revolutionary poets and musicians found in these radical influences an alternative *lahja* to that preached by Jordanization.

Ahmad’s comments on not seeing *maqam* as “a museum” refer to contrasting visions of modernity in the Iraqi scene, with similarities in the next section on Damascus. Although he finds concern in the “fragility of culture,” evidenced by the extinction of scores of *maqamat*, for example, over the last century, and laments the loss of “average knowledge” of musical concepts by Arab listeners, he does not see his role as “rescuing something.” *Maqam* tradition should be “as dynamic and reflective as possible. Of course, you have to go back and learn the form, structure, and vocabulary but I don’t want people to go back in time musically.” Arising from Jordanian conditions in the 1980s, I see this philosophy of a committed musician

as referential to the new tools of expression sought by Palestinian cultural activists. As one collective experience of Bilad al-Sham, a committed political and artistic comradeship shaped the *lahja musiqiya* spoken by the *oud* of Ahmad Al Khatib.

### Tareq Salhia's Syria: *Maqam*, Modernity, and the Classical Guitar

I feel that it is clear that the influence of *sharqi* music inside me represents who I am. Thinking about jazz, for instance, each player adds their own stamp to their playing when they improvise: John McLaughlin has a clear style, for example. Even if I play Western or classical music, I think it is true that you can tell where I'm from.

I consider myself a Palestinian-Syrian and that my rights here are the same as my Syrian friends. My father was ill and passed away when I was young and so, unfortunately, didn't tell me many stories about Palestine. I believe that Palestinians are oppressed people and in our right of return.

Even if I was Beethoven and not Tareq Salhia, I'd have the same problems if I was Palestinian.

In conversation, Tareq Salhia speaks with the *madani* accent of urban Damascus (figure 6).<sup>57</sup> He attributes this to growing up in the city among Syrians and Palestinians, in a close-knit neighborhood where some family



6. Tareq Salhia at Damascus Opera House, August 9, 2018. Photograph by Ghyath Haboub.



members had intermarried with the locals. He recalls early musical experiences of neighbors hearing him play guitar and of sharing bootleg cassettes with others his age in the late 1970s and 1980s. Others in the region had picked up the instrument: performing in Western styles, it appeared in the hands of Palestinians George Kirmiz and Zeinab Shaath, and accompanied Fairuz, Ahmed Kaabour, and others in Bilad al-Sham. Egyptian electric guitarist Omar Khorshid played melodic parts in the orchestras of Umm Kulthum and Abdel Halim Hafez in the 1960s. But put off by Khorshid—a “big craze at the time”—Tareq came to reject the newly established Arab school of guitar in favor of developing new techniques for performing microtonal *maqamat* and ornamentation. Along with many recorded examples from his career, our conversations revealed the multiple influences present in Tareq’s approach, related to a Damascus scene seeking to modernize traditional *maqam*.

At seven years old, Tareq picked up the nylon-strung classical guitar given to him by a family member, initially seeing it as a “toy” that he would figure out himself. One neighbor mentioned that to play guitar you would need chords: “I’d ask, ‘*shu ya’ni*?’ [what does that mean?]. I later learned that there are a million ways to play chords, from tremolo to arpeggios, *ras-gueado*, power chords.” Initially finding books inaccessible, Tareq turned to music he heard at home:

I played a little as a child, very simply, and without real direction. . . . The first song I learned was “*Sirit al-hubb*” [The mention of love] by Umm Kulthum. And this is interesting because it uses *maqam sikah*, which isn’t something normally playable on the guitar. . . . The B half-flat isn’t present on the guitar, and I was really determined to be able to play it.

Later, after listening to blues music and jazz fusion guitarists like Al Di Meola, Tareq invented a string bending technique that he would develop over the years, in a melodic approach to playing *maqamat* that he admits still has not caught on: “To this day, people don’t truly know how to play *musiqā sharqiya* on guitar.” Abdel Wahab, Baligh Hamdi, and other composers writing for Khorshid had focused on *maqamat* where roughly equivalent notes could be found on guitar, writing *maqam* melodies in *kurd*, *nahawand*, or ‘*ajam*, and introducing simple chordal harmonies to

rhythmic patterns.<sup>58</sup> It should be noted that Tareq's approach to *maqam* also involved approximation: *maqam sikah* traditionally includes "natural" notes that fall outside of equal temperament, but this standardization was far from new, and spoke to the push and pull of modernization present in Egyptian and Syrian musics. Damascene thinking around modernity and tradition were part of the soundworld in which Tareq began to play an active role.

Picking up chords too, he developed versatility and began to see music as a way out of poverty:

My father died when I was still young, and we were poor. I tried working to try and live, to bring in a bit of money, but didn't have any success. Then I got a job working with a band in a restaurant and it slowly became my profession. I'd play with well-known local musicians, *mutribin*<sup>59</sup> in nightclubs, hotels, and restaurants.

As a youth, Tareq learned on the job, combining growth as a musician with a need to earn. There was "a lot of money" in Damascus gigging in the 1980s and 1990s, and he found success, but something about this kind of performance felt degrading: "I didn't really like playing as people ate and drank." Like Shannon's observation of a 1990s Damascus *tarab* group and Beken's analysis of the Turkish *gazino*, there is a sense that restaurant music was geared toward audience expectations, rather than embodying the musicians' artistic invention.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast to this scene, Tareq describes his performances with Syria's prominent Palestinian musicians in different terms. As a teenager, he began to play with the prominent musician, folklorist, and activist Hussain Nazik, "an outstanding Palestinian maestro from my parents' generation and a comrade of my father's." Nazik cofounded the band al-Ashiqaen in Damascus in 1977 and a young Tareq played with them at a concert in Jordan, performing more regularly in Nazik's second band, Zenobia. Finding inspiration from "someone who had really mastered traditional wind instruments," Tareq was encouraged to train formally and enrolled at the Higher Institute of Music in Damascus, where study was free. Continuing to study *sharqi* guitar, percussion, and voice alongside *maqam* and European classical training, he would go on to work with prominent Syrian musicians including *oud* player Hussain Sabsaby, and launched a regional career.

He would play guitar on the Fairuz album *Eh Fi Amal*, and percussion with Ziad Rahbani at his 2008 concert at the Damascus Citadel.

Prior to 2011, Tareq was one of many Syria-based musicians to travel internationally, playing at festivals and concerts in Spain and Finland, but the barriers of obtaining visas for Palestinian refugees began to get in the way: “This is where the politics comes in—the treatment we get when we travel is tortuous. In Lebanon they really made problems, even though I was playing with Ziad Rahbani.” The problems were multiplied with the outbreak of war, with virtual siege conditions in Damascus and a severe currency crisis hitting incomes from gigging and music teaching. Events put things into perspective:

Before 2011, we lived very well in Syria, Palestinians and Syrians alike. Our lives were very good [*hilwa kteer*], we had security, stability, work, and music. The crisis has affected everyone in Syria—and there are people of many nationalities living here. Life is now really difficult compared to before. You feel that the whole world is at war with Syria and we feel it economically.

There is a level of stoicism to Tareq’s words as he describes continuing in Damascus under war conditions. He had been employed by the Higher Institute since 2000 and says he continued teaching “just for the students,” though monthly salaries were a fraction of their prewar level, adding that “we don’t see teaching as business.” In the context of unfolding disaster, Tareq saw a window of opportunity for developing his musical approach:

I’m always searching for new pieces to perform. . . . I remember that in 2013, the war in Syria became really ugly, and we couldn’t move from our houses amid the bombings and stress. So I sat in the house for the majority of the summer and researched new *sama’iyat*, etudes, different techniques. . . . After this whole period of study, I’d arrived at a body of work that I felt was really excellent.

There are similarities between these words and the stories of Gaza’s blockaded musicians, who see obstacles turned into opportunities for artistic invention, and they also echo experiences of besieged refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan. I see parallels in the self-motivated research of

Palestinian folklorists and activists, many of whom have trawled through historic poetry and musical archaeologies to try and discover lost cultural gems or for the purpose of preserving national culture. One of the “new” pieces learned in the lockdown conditions of 2013 was a rarely performed *sama’i* composed by Palestinian *oud* player Rawhi al-Khammash in *maqam ‘ajam ‘ushairan*, and found in an old book of musical scores. Tareq admits not finding himself particularly attracted to the *sama’i* form, but says he felt this piece was something special.

On August 9, 2018, Tareq appeared at the national Opera House, in an event billed as a “night of *sharqi* guitar.” He had played here many times before, but now was different. First, the new series of concerts carried an implicit message from the authorities that, though the situation in many parts of the country was still uncertain, Damascus was leading a return to normality. And, importantly for Tareq and his coperformers, he was now leading his own group of musicians as the headline act, shaping his own repertoire and finding a platform for his distinct musical *lahja*. The al-Khammash *sama’i* was performed in a duo with percussionist Mohammad Shehadeh on *riqq*.

Carrying the influence of the Iraqi context in which he composed, al-Khammash included arpeggio-like phrases in this and other *sama’iyat*, offering the temptation for a guitarist to build harmonically, yet al-Khammash’s own recording actually includes more frequent double stops, highlighting Tareq’s distance from the Iraqi context. Whereas the *oud* playing of al-Khammash contained characteristic tremolo, slurred notes, and Iraqi-school polyphony, Tareq used left-hand legato techniques including hammer-ons and guitaristic trills, and occasional staccato to color melodic phrases. Creating a new climax, the influence of John McLaughlin’s plectrum-on-nylon style of quick picking was applied to the final *khana* in *nahawand do*, doubled in speed compared to the composer’s recording. This flourish was well received by an audience applauding most loudly at rhythmically energetic pieces.

Elsewhere in the Opera House concert, Tareq was joined by Bassem Salha on piano and Layla Saleh on double bass, and he performed a duo version of Zaki Nasif’s “Ya ‘ashiqat al-ward” with his son Muhamad Salhia on violin. While this grouping was unusual, particularly for performances of *sama’iyat* and *longat*, the band’s makeup speaks to the circle of musicians around the Higher Institute and to its binary focus on Arab and

Western classical musics. All of the pieces performed were Arab or Turkish in origin but there were jazz, flamenco, and other cosmopolitan touches to the arrangements, for example in the flamenco-like phrases in Tareq's *taqsim* introduction to the Umm Kulthum song "Inta 'umri," which blended melodic and chordal techniques in *maqam kurd*. In this example, Salha's piano responded harmonically to the *tahwilat* (modulations) in Tareq's playing. This division of labor continued later in the piece as Tareq utilized string bends to vocalize, where Umm Kulthum had sung "*Kull farha ishta'ha . . .*" (Every enjoyment I've missed . . .), with piano joining the rhythm section. Tareq's stage persona embodied this collective approach; he raised his hand in salute of his musician comrades, exclaiming "*Allah*" in their direction during audience applause. After one piece, a *sama'i* by Göksel Baktagir, he embraced the crowd response: "This is Syria, a land of artists [*mubdi'in*]," which prompted more clapping. Tareq would return to the Opera House in the wake of the May 2021 confrontation in Palestine alongside Mohammad Sabsaby on *oud*, receiving a standing ovation and the backing of the Ministry of Culture.

Tareq's musical interpretations in his 2018 concert showcased his involvement in a Damascus music scene that had held together during years of ongoing crisis. Speaking in a musical language understood by the group, his own contribution brought out seldom-played pieces, performed in a manner that could accommodate each player yet promote a collective instrumental *lahja*. I have highlighted his promotion of Palestinian composer al-Khammash in an arrangement that carried energy and melodic invention, yet it should be noted that other musicians in the orbit of the Higher Institute have also performed new arrangements of al-Khammash pieces, including *buzuq* players Mohammad Osman and his late younger brother Eyad. Others, including Salha and Wissam Shaer, who have also played with Tareq, have sought to develop *maqam* repertoires on different instruments, with Salha and Shaer developing clarinet and accordion, respectively. Negotiating the paradoxical visions of "old" and "new" Damascus,<sup>61</sup> they simultaneously engage in standardizing modern instrumentalism<sup>62</sup> while seeking to expand the technical capacities of traditional expression.

If al-Khammash gave voice to an Iraqi dialect for some compositions and later *oud* performances, Tareq has become a Palestinian component

of a Syrian scene seeking to redefine and “modernize” musical dialect. Though it could also be said that prewar Syria saw a rise of Westernized pop,<sup>63</sup> this collective forms part of a reorienting toward Arab art music. Tareq and his musical circle navigate the modernizing process and official performance spaces through the adoption of novel *lahajat musiqiya*. A frequently occurring phrase in our discussions was the notion of “*classiki*” (classical), used interchangeably when describing Western and *sharqi* genres. However, Tareq has approached Arab art musics at a distance from two poles of attraction, described here as a “split” between Egypt and Iraq.

Noting his experience with Palestinian bandleader Hussain Nazik, still a respected public figure in Syria,<sup>64</sup> and Ziad Rahbani, a well-known leftist, avant-garde artist and supporter of the Palestinian cause, it seems clear that the development of Tareq’s musical voice has taken place in the milieu of commitment, speaking to alternative pan-Arabism amid Damascus’s claim to be a center of cultural heritage. Rahbani is also noted as charting an alternative *maqam* path, independent of Cairene dominance.<sup>65</sup> Tareq’s journey speaks to the place of one Palestinian in one Syrian musical scene. Referencing the language of *sumud* through endurance of crisis conditions, his narrative of the limitations of being a refugee has seen his career pushed into greater reliance on group production. War, sanctions, and economic crisis have been the catalysts of collective musical invention in times of extreme uncertainty.

### Nationalism, *Sumud*, and the Palestinian Bagpipers of South Lebanon

Nothing stops tradition. Lots of countries collude against the Palestinian people, but we’re here to say that Palestine is something constant.

–ZIAD

At one point we had three pipes to share between fifteen people who all played and needed them. Our teachers would manage the situation and little by little we managed to get hold of instruments, and someone started to manufacture them in Lebanon. . . . The band began to get bigger, we got drums, and it became more sustainable.

–MUSTAPHA



7. Bahaa Joumaa and Mustapha Dakhoul, middle row, first and second from right, with Beit Atfal Assumoud bagpipe band, 2016. Courtesy of the artists.

I wouldn't know how to become a fighter or hold a weapon but I can contribute to the Palestinian cause through culture, music, and art. Everything I do is working toward the Palestinian cause.

—BAHAA

Coming from families expelled from villages near Safad, northern Palestine in 1948, the three musicians involved in this final story of Bilad al-Sham have lived in Borj el-Shemali refugee camp for all of their twenty-four to thirty-two years. Linked by their involvement in bagpiping troupes in the camp, they became involved in music initially through the Beit Atfal Assumoud project, an NGO formed after the Tel al-Za'tar massacre in August 1976, and its twenty-strong band, Sumud Guirab, initiated in 1989 to promote bagpiping among Palestinian refugees (figure 7). Advancing through the ranks of the band, beginning at chanter level,<sup>66</sup> progressing as bandleaders and volunteer teachers, the musicians represent different levels of involvement and professionalism. Others in the band look up to Bahaa Joumaa, who is the oldest of the three *shabab* and has been a bagpiper for sixteen years; he now plays *nai* and other traditional wind instruments and studies musicology. Ziad Hbouss Ali has begun to teach younger Guirab members and finds work as a bagpiper for traditional



weddings. At a similar level to Ziad, Mustapha Dakhoul balances his band practice with unstable work in health care.

The *shabab* voice differing reasons for taking up music: as an alternative to nothingness, drugs, and poverty impacting refugee camps in Lebanon; for potential earnings in an economy where Palestinians have few rights; a family love of music and encouragement of a fruitful pastime; and a means of attracting young women. Yet these are seen as secondary to the pronouncement of Mustapha that “we play for the Palestinian cause.” All three narrate their involvement in band musicianship, playing nationalist, heritage-based, or revolutionary songs<sup>67</sup> and participating in protest marches and commemorative events as ways of connecting to Palestine, with tradition (*taqlid*) being a key concept for the group. All express hopes of returning to their Palestinian homeland. For Ziad, the bagpipes are at the center of “keeping alive the traditional Palestinian *zaffa*,” or wedding procession, while Bahaa sees a furthering of folkloric and *maqam* research and wind instruments as “getting deeper into tradition.” With a post-Oslo process abandoning the Bilad al-Sham refugees, and amid the chaos of Lebanese economic decline and political crisis, I see the vocal embrace of collective *sumud* as a challenge to the conditions of exile faced by youth “languishing” in twenty-first-century Lebanon. The *lahja* of Palestinian resistance takes on new forms through instruments liberated from colonialist intervention.

Despite their widespread association with Highland tradition (including in Borj el-Shemali) bagpipes do not originate in Scotland, having appeared in the Middle East over a millennium earlier.<sup>68</sup> The Highland bagpipes were co-opted into the British War Office in 1854, and their presence multiplied across the empire, being used as processional, diplomatic, and cultural appendages to colonization. Reports from the orientalist O'Dwyer of British-occupied Peshawar at the turn of the twentieth century claimed that “all hillmen . . . are very fond of the bagpipes” brought by the colonial troops.<sup>69</sup> Outside of the Arab world, British colonialism left behind bagpipe traditions in disparate locations, including Hong Kong,<sup>70</sup> Singapore, and Pakistan, the last now a center of bagpipe production drawn on by the Lebanon *shabab*.<sup>71</sup> Bagpipes came to be used in wedding celebrations in parts of rural North India and Pakistan over the colonial period, resulting in sounds that are symbolic of contact with imperialism and the formation of regional identities in the years after British rule.<sup>72</sup> In



the official politics of postcolonial Bilad al-Sham, the Jordanian royals have incorporated bagpipes into ceremonial practices since the Amir ‘Abdullah recruited British military personnel as trainers in 1920s Trans-jordan, embracing a “modern” transformation praised then by British imperialists.<sup>73</sup>

Though smaller, cheaper models are now used, the Great Highland bagpipes arrived in Palestine during the British occupation from 1917, a period of repression along linguistic, sectarian, and national lines in the wake of the Balfour Declaration.<sup>74</sup> Initially connected to the British Boy Scouts, social and musical techniques brought by imperialism were appropriated by Palestinian youth in the wake of Britain’s pull-out and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948.<sup>75</sup> According to Bahaa:

From the British occupation, the *girbeh* [singular of *girab*, bagpipes] passed into Palestinian society [*intaqalat*] and people began to play it. In 1948, it departed with the refugees to Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, carried by the people who had played it. In Lebanon, some *girbeh* players came via the Palestinian camps in Syria. After the problems between Jordan and the Palestinians, and after the [1960s] Palestinian revolution, they moved to Syria, and from Syria to Lebanon. So it has become part of Palestinian culture, and in weddings, parties, national occasions, social events, you will find people playing the bagpipes.<sup>76</sup>

With the shifting musical geography arising from the events and catastrophes of the post-Nakba period, ensembles endure in Palestine and the instrument sometimes appears on Palestinian protest marches further afield.<sup>77</sup> Since the 2011 Syrian crisis, Ziad notes that Syrian players who had learned from Palestinians arrived as refugees in South Lebanon, with some returning home after the Lebanese downturn. There are now bag-piping groups on all sides of partitioned Palestine, including Gaza, and among circles of refugees across Bilad al-Sham. Prominent bands and Scout clubs speak in the politicized language of Palestinian heritage and *sumud*, as shown by the repertoire performed by the musicians.

Suggesting a well-drilled list of songs from Palestinian heritage and struggle, all three pipers recalled learning “‘Al-raba’iyyeh” and “Wein ‘a-Ramallah” as their first two songs. The musicians’ experience of perfor-

mance suggests that these songs were in high demand at weddings and political events, forming an essential repertoire for pipers in the refugee community. According to Ziad:

In the *zaffa*, bagpipes become political. So we must play [the songs] “Wein ‘a Ramallah,” “‘Al-raba‘iyyeh,” because the basics of bagpipes are *turathi*. It needs to remain a part of our heritage, not just something that is popular. . . . Here, a lot of people treat us as though we are a big thing in their lives because we can make people smile. Many girls and boys in the audience really react to our music, and we feel that it has value and importance.

The pipes are learned initially on chanters in group sessions led by former students who are now young men and women, so that the transmission style of camp pipers is a shared experience, which aims at melodic unison. In a typical student performance filmed by Bahaa on *Yawm al-Shahid* (Martyr’s Day), January 7, 2015, six drummers joined a band of fifteen teenage boys and girls, playing the “Hymn of sumud” in *maqam ‘ajam*. Scout uniforms and bagpipes were emblazoned with Palestinian flags, which also decorated the room at the group’s center, where dozens of younger scouts and their family members look on. The organization al-Kashaf al-Watani al-Falastini (National Palestinian Scouts) is a well-oiled community, and Bahaa feels proud that the Sumud association enables participants to go on and find work. Their playing is “more advanced even than the Lebanese army’s troupe—this is a victory for the Palestinians!”

Among the numerous spaces and forms of wind-based performance entered into by the three *shabab*, two avenues stand out for their contrasting practices and aesthetic connotations: Ziad’s informal employment as a “traditional” bagpiper in group performance at wedding processions and Bahaa’s involvement as a *nai* player in the band al-Manfiyin (The exiles), which performs wedding repertoires alongside *tarab* art music and revolutionary song.

The Borj el-Shemali *zaffat* (plural of *zaffa*) take on musical and aesthetic forms different than those depicted in classic anthropological accounts of the Palestinian wedding, or in artistic representations of *turathi* practices.<sup>78</sup> Ziad summarizes:

In the traditional *zaffit al-hamam*, the groom's friends and family take him for a shower, dress him in Palestinian clothes, and have a bigger party in the evening. Many Palestinians in Lebanon prefer traditional weddings. *Henna*, *hammam*, and the traditional procedures are still present. . . . The band decides on the music with singer Mahmoud, who leads and we follow. . . . We play Palestinian songs when we arrive at the *hammam*, and all of the family and relatives of the groom sing traditional songs—not for the whole *zaffa*, but for a period in the wedding proceedings.

As a form of employment, many of the weddings Ziad and the group perform at embody aspects of demand and supply, according to both the musical tastes and the visual presentations requested by the host. The latter includes dress: at some bookings, the male musicians wear traditional *fellahi* headdresses and gowns, with females in *tatriz* dresses, while other events call for white shirt and tie, and others still feature smartened street clothes. There is concern for authenticity on the part of the performers too: at a one-off event for the Lebanese National Theater in May 2019, Ziad and a larger group wore gold-trimmed red gowns and shawls, traditionalized but, he reports, these costumes were “not traditionally Palestinian . . . the band was disappointed.” Requested music may include solely Palestinian-linked *turathi* songs or wider regional varieties (Bahaa points out that many of the songs are shared historically—“it is all one region in my eyes”), or versions of twentieth-century classics or pop songs. The size of the band also depends on the particular engagement, from Ziad as a singular bagpiper alongside a group of *darabukka* players, or the same plus a vocalist, to a full troupe of around twenty players with *tanbur* and, occasionally, drum set.

Drawing on regional sounds, Ziad's bagpipe style is typical of the developed skills of pipers who have graduated from the Sumud band, utilizing fingering techniques which immerse the instrument in Palestinian tradition. Seeing the bagpipes as “limited” compared to the double-reed instruments of Bilad al-Sham and Egypt, Ziad aims to “imitate” the latter. This *lahja* is applied to wider Arab repertoires. During a typical street *zaffa* in October 2020, Ziad led the procession alongside *tabla*, *tar*, and bass drum players. Ziad performed a particular melodic introduction in *maqam bayat*, traditionally played on *mijwiz* or *org* as an opening to the folksong

“Al-‘ein mulayitain,” also played regularly by Ziad’s band.<sup>79</sup> This time, however, Ziad launches into Umm Kulthum’s “al-Qalb yi’sha’ kull gamil” (The heart loves everything beautiful), confounding expectations and voicing an Egyptian song in a Palestinian dialect. At an energetic outdoor wedding in the Beqaa Valley a month before, Ziad performed the same *bayati* introduction as part of an intense rhythmic piece, while the bride and groom, Mohamed and Jamila, danced at the center of a circle. This time, the opening was followed by a microphoned vocalist singing “‘Urs al-ghawali,” a modern wedding song by Lebanese vocalist Melhem Zein, along with percussion accompaniment and Ziad’s pipes.

Alongside weddings embracing broader Arab tastes, Ziad reports a growing interest in “traditional Palestinian music and *dabke*,” especially in the camps. Practicing in December 2020 for an upcoming family wedding, he affirmed that the group would perform “political” material, featuring “Wein ‘a Ramallah,” “Al-raba’iyyeh” and other nationalist songs. Concepts around style, sound, presentation, and content are all ascribed meaning in the narratives of the *shabab*.

The traditional wedding described in Sbait’s study of improvised sung poetry<sup>80</sup> begins the evening before, with the *sahrit el-‘aris* (groom’s evening), “debating” poet-singers, street *dabke* and procession; the wedding day begins with an indoor groom’s shaving party, referred to as the *zaffa*, and featuring long reams of sung debate, “a drummer and a double-reed musician”; there is no description of the bride’s *henna* ceremony, traditionally only attended by females. Ziad’s Borj el-Shemali timetable of the Palestinian wedding usually happens in a single day, centered on the final *zaffa*, in practice a procession of the married couple—and in some cases a static, circular performance at a nearby hotel. “*Henna*, *hammam*, and the traditional procedures are still present,” Ziad reports, “but these are rare and the bagpipes unfortunately don’t play” in these sections. The *zaffa* in this case is followed by dancing, improvised melodic playing, and singing of nationalist songs led by the singers and bagpipers, who determine the setlists.

Bahaa adds that many of the songs exist “between wedding celebration and nationalist revolutionary” material, naming “Tall slahi min jirahi” (I draw my weapon from my wounds), “Zayyin al-saheh” (Decorate the square), “Wein al-malayin?” (Where are the millions? [by Julia Boutros]), and “Ya umm il-‘aris zaghrideh” (Mother of the groom, ululate). Not

unusually, songs of armed resistance are placed directly next to songs of *farah*, or celebration. There is crossover here with music played at commemorative events, which form a staple of the young bagpipers' calendar, with the same musicians appearing together at political marches. Ziad lists Martyrs Day, Sabra and Shatila, and Land Day among the most important commemorations: "We see that the masses are interested in the messages and the music. The events are full of mixed emotions." To this list, Mustapha adds the anniversaries of the Nakba and Naksa:

We also play at demonstrations, helping to send a message to the world that we have not forgotten, and we will not be forgotten. From generation to generation, we pass down our heritage.

This connection to Palestine suggests deeper significance to Ziad's words on the emotional impact of events, enveloping the performers themselves: he admits to crying while playing at commemorative and celebratory events; videos and photos show deep affective engagement. While weddings are work for Ziad, he admits that this has resulted in little financial reward, despite occasional opportunities to travel within and outside of Lebanon. Seeing the camp as "like a prison," Ziad sees band work as "good for my health. I earn a little money, just to provide food [to the family]. We have young men and women, girls, and boys playing bagpipes, but they don't earn anything." Survival is linked here to a commitment to "keeping alive" Palestinian tradition, and a sense of duty through musical transmission.

Analyzing the aesthetics of militarist music in Haiti, existing parallel to African-derived traditional practice, Averill and Yih see the preservation of European repertoire and performance practice as "an intriguing legacy of colonization and a window into the contradictions of the post-colonial experience."<sup>81</sup> Elsewhere, Alter sees in the bagpipe-based wedding processions of the Himalayan Garhwal region a "reflection" of the alliances between local aristocrats and British rulers through a powerful sound, embedding meanings associated with royalty and military history.<sup>82</sup> In the Palestinian case, the residual instruments of European imperialism are fashioned in contexts of displacement. Bahaa's choice of language is revealing of how the once British pipes came to be used—the word *intaqal*, or "moved," also means to undergo change, to be altered or to change place

of residence. Under conditions of colonial exile, bagpipes are stripped of their British military dialect. In the hands of this group of Palestinian refugees in Borj el-Shemali, themselves subjected to *intiqal*, the act of being moved, their use is both meaningful and challenging to dominant ideas of permanency.

Echoing Ziad's words on the limitations of bagpipes, Bahaa sees work with al-Manfiyin as "getting deeper into tradition." In contrast to the street work of *zaffa*, this band's musicianship operates on a different level, as it researches and workshops *maqam* tradition using *tarab*-linked instruments such as *nai*, *oud*, *qanun*, *buzuq*, and *riqq*. During my fieldwork, the group began recording their first album, with wedding material set alongside *sama'i*, *basharif*, and other forms; a third of the album focused on revolutionary nationalist songs. Prior to preparing the music, Bahaa and the group "carried out recordings of older people, grandparents, around music that was present before the Palestinian Nakba," getting deeper into *maqam* and rhythm, and looking into village particularities in oral traditions. Discussing leaving behind the bagpipes for this project, Bahaa explains:

I began to realize the *nai* has a wider musical application. For example, we can also play *sama'iyat*, *basharif*, *muwashshahat*, *taqatiq*, *taqasim*, *ad-war* . . . it gave me a new challenge, to practice every day for four hours. But we can also use this broader palate to enrich nationalist song.

Involving musicians from 'Ain al-Hilweh and other camps, the group have organized sessions combining high-level musical technique with Palestinian narratives. In one example, a joint workshop tour with al-Mashq band in October 2020, the group acted as leaders in oral tuition, introducing young refugee musicians to the concept of *wasla* and the importance of *bayati* as a *maqam* used in Palestinian folksong. The group challenged the young musicians to perform compound rhythms contained in *muwashshah* compositions; exercises in *maqam* ear training were combined with group singing of songs such as "Baladi ya baladi," expressing a longing for the right of return. The practice of the group appropriates the high art of regional *tarab*, bringing narratives of Palestinian revolution and steadfastness into play. Having long been politicized in the Palestinian case, wedding music is voiced in new ways in the Lebanese *ghurba*.

### ***Lahja Musiqiya* and Palestinian Tradition in Contemporary Bilad al-Sham**

In the context of ongoing displacement in Bilad al-Sham, *lahajat falastiniya*, or Palestinian dialects, are important signifiers of place and collective belonging, referencing pre-1948 or pre-1967 times, socialities, and origins. Differences range from clear preservation of dialects from Palestine in the camps to total linguistic assimilation with the host country in cities, with many people speaking in multiple dialects or negotiating social circumstances by switching between two; Juliane Hammer found that, in Lebanon, most spoke Palestinian dialect at home;<sup>83</sup> *lahja* also expresses gender binaries.<sup>84</sup> In the throes of ethnic cleansing, war, and crisis, *lahajat* are politicized by ruling classes, native populations, opposing sides in struggle, and refugees. In one notorious example, when traversing wartime Lebanon's sectarian checkpoints, the difference between Palestinian and Lebanese words for tomato (*bandura* and *banadura*) could mean life or death.<sup>85</sup> Across Bilad al-Sham, differences in language are historically bound up with social being and status, and with dichotomies of naturalization versus rejectionism. Lexicons of musicians, revolutionaries, citizens, elites, and academics are deep in associative meaning, expressing positions on real-life developments, whether localized or imposed from without.

*Lahja musiqiya*, or musical dialect, is more difficult to pin down as a clear marker of Palestinianism than regional accent. Often, references to lyrics are clearer: Boulos's documentation of the song "Hilw ya burtu'an," recorded in Palestine during the British Mandate, uses a pronunciation of "orange" thought to be specific to the Palestinian city of Yafa—refugees interviewed for this book also used *burtu'an*, and linked it to family origins in other Palestinian towns. The *shabab* pronounce song names like "Al-raba'iyyeh" with the *-eh* ending typical of urban Palestine and Lebanon. Scholars, musicians, and collectors of folkloric poetry have documented and discussed geographies of dialect and localized struggle over the last century.<sup>86</sup>

Musical references to place-specific *lahja* surfaced during fieldwork for this chapter, suggesting some debate within fields of Palestinian musicianship. Ahmad Al Khatib sees an "almost identical approach to melody" among *oud* players hailing from Tarshiha, Nazareth, and northern

Palestine, naming *oud* players Simon Shaheen and the Trio Joubran and suggesting that “you can tell which region of Palestine they’re from.” From the village of Rama in Galilee, Khaled Jubran admits, “Ahmad and I play in totally different dialects.” However, unlike Basel Zayed’s claims of a distinct Palestinian *maqam bayat*,<sup>87</sup> Ahmad was skeptical of the existence of a distinct approach to *maqam*, and saw differences with folk music: “Maybe in northern Palestine they had a particular style of ‘*ataba* and *mijana*, but it doesn’t reach the point of saying that there is a *maqam* tradition.” Though existing scholarship may tend to back up this point, describing pre-1948 *maqam* musicianship in terms of a growing urban practice, we still do not have a full picture of music practice in historic Palestine.<sup>88</sup> The Nakba violently interrupts discussions of Palestinian musical tradition.

Many examples of contemporary or historic Palestinian music refer to broader regional *lahajat*, reinscribing Palestine as a collective part of Bilad al-Sham.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, songs are shared regionally, carrying differing meanings and implications depending on context, style, and performer profile, while exhibiting or rejecting certain forms of Westernization: Bahaa Joumaa makes a point of saying that the al-Manfiyin group rejects “technology or electronic instruments” in its arrangements of folk and revolutionary melodies; bagpipe technique has been nationalized, borrowing from Palestinian double-reed wind traditions.

The findings of this chapter suggest that Palestinian musicianship has impacted music making in host countries, whether through Syrian arrangements of al-Khammash compositions or in the refugee journeys that brought British-implanted bagpipes from Mandate-era Jerusalem to modern Lebanon. For Fanon, the colonized “native intellectual” behaves like a foreigner, struggling to speak in his own dialect and utilizing techniques and languages that are borrowed from the stranger in his country.”<sup>90</sup> Palestine shows that this path has many bends, and that cultural artifacts of exile within the realms of other colonized or “post-colonial” countries also become part of the intellectual palette of artistic producers.

Following Darwish’s recollection of the “primitive psalms” of his mother and the creeping weakness of his grandfather’s voice as he read the news, Diana Allan charts the fragmentary moments of living through the post-1948 disaster, carrying “visceral descriptions of places, things and ways of being.” Language becomes a corporeal expression, “underscoring how



social and material worlds are sensed, and how sense matters for communicating experience.”<sup>91</sup> Like the musicians of other chapters, the Bilad al-Sham performers became musicians through experiences of exile, through, on the whole, nonwritten forms of transmission. Ong sees primary orality as fostering personalities “that in certain ways are more communal and externalized, and less introspective than those common among literates. Oral communication unites people in groups.”<sup>92</sup>

Though such ideas were formed in anthropological analysis of “nonliterate” contexts, Haeri links Arabic linguistic traditions to orality, and “aesthetic and musical qualities [that] move its listeners, creating feelings of spirituality, nostalgia and community.”<sup>93</sup> All of the musicians in this chapter initially learned their Arab and Palestinian musics orally, even if Ahmad and Tareq also went on to study in conservatoire settings using notation. The junctures of musical and linguistic orality in Bilad al-Sham are parts of a collective experience, both expressive of material pasts, and tendencies toward liberation from colonial rootlessness.

As shown in the constellation of village identities forming the communities of Borj el-Shemali and Irbid camps, or in the varied roots of cross-town Damascus Palestinians, displacement has brought together those displaced from neighboring areas of Palestine and those whose lives were further removed from each other. Following Al-Wer’s description of Palestinian Arabic as “an umbrella term” for a host of rural and urban local varieties,<sup>94</sup> Horesh argues that geography and linguistic borders are limited frameworks, seeing the “*speakers* of the language” as shaping “not only matters of “attitude” and “identity” but also how the languages they speak evolve and orient toward one another.” Moreover:

The plight of the Palestinian people, as it is often referred to in humanitarian and political contexts, can shed much needed light on the linguistic consequences of shifting borders and the kinds of forced or semi-forced multilingualisms such process can impose.<sup>95</sup>

Continuing this sociolinguistic theme, in a rare case study of Palestinian refugees in Khan Eshieh camp, on the outskirts of Damascus, Shetewi shows the agency of the group in utilizing *lahja* to maintain connections to Palestine and build social solidarity. Noting the relative equality of rights enjoyed by Palestinians in Syria compared to neighboring countries, and

the position afforded to the Palestinian cause in official politics, she argues that language is “one medium” for expressing pride in Palestinian identity.<sup>96</sup> The community she studies sees *lahja* as resistance to assimilation, but this is by no means universal of Palestinian experience—Tareq Salhia may be viewed by Khan Eshieh residents as *yitshawwam* (someone who has become Damascene). Expressing regret, Salhia views it as “unfortunate” that certain Palestinian traditions never reached him, citing his father’s passing when he was young.

In times of intensified struggle, language and dialect express discourses of power and resistance. Following Jordan’s 1967 loss of its West Bank occupation and its confrontation with Palestinian forces, everything from clothing and football was subject to “Jordanization.” As Massad shows, Jordanian and Palestinian dialects were redefined rigidly after Black September in 1970, with a campaign by Jordanians to claim the pronunciation of the Arabic letter *qaf* as “*ga*” as both national signifier and claim to masculinity.<sup>97</sup> Struggles over control of rhetorical space intensified during Ahmad’s apprenticeship as a young *oud* player, with the Writers’ Union of which his father was a prominent member forced underground when a confrontation with the Hashemite state reintensified in 1986. Ahmad had performed regularly at the union’s gatherings in Irbid, but new space now had to be found for utterances of oppositional music and poetry amid a violent crackdown. Ziad, Mustafa, and Bahaa lived through the Zionist invasion of 2006, in which whole families were obliterated.<sup>98</sup> Their music is ingrained with a calendar of commemorations, protests, and politically framed social events.<sup>99</sup>

### Conclusions: New Blood and the Shadow of 2011

I have swallows and bricktop roofs,  
And know what it means when you’re far away  
My feelings, my love  
No longer take me back  
But there is hope, yes there is hope  
–FAIRUZ, “EH FI AMAL”

Language about the regional crisis from 2011 is revealing of the power relations of local performance and international involvement, alongside

material repercussions of the “Arab Spring” for Palestinians and others across Bilad al-Sham. Academic and cultural narratives of a “Syrian Spring,” whose results have seen displacement into Lebanon and Jordan, are political narratives, taking sides in a high-stakes battle between independence and recolonization, or regime change.<sup>100</sup> European patronage for performance by Syrian refugees, for instance, is rarely viewed within the wider context of interventionism,<sup>101</sup> or in the terms used by Palestinians criticizing NGOization (see chapter 6), but Jacquemond and Lang regard it as a “supportive” guarantor of “autonomy” after 2011.<sup>102</sup> The autonomy of artists driven to Western fame during the Syrian crisis is questionable at best: “Pianist of Yarmouk” Aeham Ahmed’s mass media co-option alongside European regime change narratives was enough for a prominent Palestinian journalist to decide against publishing his story.<sup>103</sup> In a contrasting example, Basset al-Sarout was lauded after his death as a “singer of the revolution,” yet died as an armed combatant for “the Salafi-Jihadist ideology embraced by such groups as al-Qaeda and ISIS,” according to Landis.<sup>104</sup>

Language used in academic discussion of the Syrian crisis is imbued with ideologically driven language. “Revolution” is rarely defined in terms of its historical source or course, and is used casually by academics<sup>105</sup> and a range of mainstream, right-wing, and liberal voices. “Regime” is now an epithet applied almost exclusively to the Syrian state. Revolutionary histories of Palestinian struggle, referred to here in the context of Lebanon and Jordan alongside Syria, are rarely present in Western academic narratives of events in the region. To do so would, I suggest, raise unpalatable questions of Arab, Turkish, and imperialist fueling of the armed conflict lauded as a revolution in these texts. Moreover, in terms of cultural analyses, what I term Arab Springist views of the contemporary arts scene in Damascus are littered with clichés about Syrian cultural “monotony” and unoriginality,<sup>106</sup> lamenting the suppression of individual freedom in favor of national interests,<sup>107</sup> and viewing Syria as a Baathist monoculture.<sup>108</sup>

It is not the purpose of this study to paint the Damascus Opera House as a neutral space, but the musical interventions of Tareq Salhia and Hus-sain Nazik are suggestive of the ways Palestinian *lahajat* could be voiced and the Syrian context negotiated. Though not brought up in a refugee camp, Tareq spent years navigating the working spaces of migrant

musicianship—and the barriers of international travel—which suggests that his own expressions of musical *lahja* have a class basis as a minority musician in fields of modern music in Syria. Unlike in other accounts here, nationals of the host country appear in creative collaboration with Palestinian artistry.

Blanket descriptions of the “Arab Spring,” as Meari, El Said, and Pratt point out, imply a “hibernation” among Arab nations prior to 2010 and new promises of “blossoming” democracy.<sup>109</sup> It can be added that the narratives critiqued by the authors contain parallels to descriptions of native backwardness before colonization,<sup>110</sup> while “oases of freedom” and “wellsprings of language” appear as gifts from Europe.<sup>111</sup> Unfettered from analysis of neoliberalism and the military obliteration of postcolonial orders in the region, or of the “soft power” of cultural NGOization and treatment of refugees as political pawns, independent and socialist states are seen as inherently bureaucratic. Narratives of the regional crisis discussed here avail themselves of questions of space and expressions of Palestinian refugee culture by presenting “the regime” as a self-contained phenomenon while rejecting the living legacies of anti-imperialist struggle embraced through grassroots attachment to the Palestinian cause. Allied to such standpoints, the liberationist content of refugee artistry is elided in favor of cultural forms and sociopolitical alliances that are acceptable to powers outside of the Middle East.

Enduring Zionist interventionism, extreme poverty, and a sectarian habitus, the *shabab* simultaneously buck certain Westernizing trends in Lebanese music, redefining the language of *maqam* alongside commemorative and social organization. Outside of bourgeois respectability, the literary circle entered into by a young *oud*-playing Ahmad drove artistic innovation further into grassroots collectivity. Assertions by Yacobi and Nasasra that the movements of the present express “collective identity rather than class or economic interests exclusively”<sup>112</sup> are rather inadequate to explain the disadvantage and exploitation that has driven Palestinian exile attachment to the national struggle. Rather than seeing identity as the driver of ostensibly emancipatory movements, my claim here is that class position and the frustrations of exile ghettoization have shaped progressive Palestinian nationalism, expressed through political and artistic reinvention, constituting a revolutionary movement long before 2011.

The stories in this chapter suggest that musical aesthetics of Palestine proliferate in communal spaces shaped by crisis and confrontation. With some exceptions, such as Zionism's twenty-first-century defeats in Lebanon, histories of Palestinian displacement in Bilad al-Sham since 1982 have resembled the periods of defeat in which Kanafani sounded his call for social revolution. Ahmad Al Khatib, Tareq Salhia, and the Borj el-Shemali *shabab* became musicians amid the wider context of failed negotiations which shelved their rights once again. I argue, however, that the critical spirit and constructive capacity predicted by Kanafani is present in the exilic musical expressions of their range of Palestinian voices, seeing an emancipatory politics behind forms of *lahja musiqiya* adopted by the musicians as having roots in theaters of confrontation with colonialism and reaction.

Moreover, as imperialist and regional powers flex their muscles, musicians struggle to redefine language and tradition in grassroots terms, casually oppositional to such games of power and embodying a spirit of liberation. Framed in this way, the social solidarities seen among Palestinian refugees by Shetewi—and Ong's sociolinguistic assertion that experiences of oral tradition are fundamentally collective—challenge the decontextualized, individually focused interpretations of *sumud*. Reading Kanafani, we may see the “new blood” of critical musicianship as arising from the communal experiences through which refugees navigate and rebel against permanent exile in Bilad al-Sham. This musical critique is furthered by ongoing connections to Palestine and its land, as aspirations sparked in youthful encounters through music, a theme deepened with regard to Gaza in the next chapter.

Kanafani's own gravitation from and back to Bilad al-Sham underlines the region's centrality to the Palestinian story. While the timeline of events references a geography of Palestinian political and cultural resistance shifting back to Palestine with the 1987 intifada, the traditions of grassroots *lahja* and Palestinian steadfastness suggest that the position of those “left on the shelf” as “waiting people,” to borrow a lyric sung by Fairuz, cannot last forever. Alongside their unequal socioeconomic positions, legacies of Palestinian communality, grassroots organization, and commitment to politics of creativity mean that their vanguard role may reemerge in Bilad al-Sham.

## CHAPTER 3

# Village Dreams in Urban Gaza: A Young Girl's Musical Intifada

## Music and Land in a Palestinian Socialist Household<sup>1</sup>

UMM ALI: Not all mothers in Gaza sing. My sisters-in-law, for example, we keep telling them, “please sing to them when you take them to bed.” Because it’s good for children to sleep with your voice singing to them. . . . My grandmas still sing to us! Old Palestinians like to sing to children, isn’t that right, Umm Fadi?

UMM FADI: Young mums now, they are too busy with their phones.

LOUIS: You’re a young mum and you do it . . .

UMM ALI: [Laughs] Umm Fadi is a good mum with that. We take any opportunity to sing but not all mothers in Gaza are like this. My older sister, I have never heard her singing to kids.

UMM FADI: Because she can’t sing!

UMM ALI: But to sing to a baby you don’t have to be a good singer. . . . What I mean is that to sing your baby to sleep is not everyone’s habit.

**T**he middle pair in a cohort of six sisters, Umm Ali and Umm Fadi frequently bring memories of their sizable sibling group into conversations on a range of topics, sometimes featuring an extended cast of aunts, uncles, cousins, and family friends. On this occasion, with Umm Fadi present for my admittedly informal interview (featuring Gazzawi fish) at her older sister’s flat, there would be singing from both, plus from Umm Ali’s twenty-one-year-old son Ali, before he headed out for work at a Manchester nightclub.

When I would see the sisters together on Umm Fadi’s visits from London, it always seemed like the force of Umm Ali’s razor-sharp critique of

everything from Arab politics to musicians was doubled as they conversed. She had just seen Marcel Khalife live and was a little disappointed by the absence of female vocalist Oumeima El Khalil, and by a choice of songs “promoting his new album,” rather than speaking to his long-standing support base among dispossessed Palestinians. Between sharing songs orally and through online listening, Umm Fadi railed against the Oslo years: “those people didn’t change anything”; she was dismayed that living in a refugee camp had contributed to her never learning of the band Sabreen.

In the intifada era of Sabreen and Marcel, Umm Ali explained to her sister, the family home in Gaza witnessed a real revolution. They had been discussing this tumultuous and exciting period before my arrival: “Last week I was talking with Umm Fadi about that time and how it was,” she would begin:

I like to remember those days because, yes there was lots of sadness, but at the same time people loved each other. Every night my brother and his friends would come to our house and sit with my dad, light the *yarghul* [shisha pipe], and talk about our village, my brother’s stories and his experience . . . I was allowed to sit and listen. The songs mean a lot . . . my country, family, friends, everything. The uprising brought people together.

Their older brother had joined the PFLP (Jabha Sha’biya) on the streets, as the generation of the stones confronted occupation, and brought back cassettes of revolutionary, leftist, and traditional songs, among them many new recordings from within and outside Palestine. To Umm Ali, each cassette was “nothing” in terms of its cost, but of high value to those in the camp:

Oh my god, it was like a diamond. Really! “Hide it here. . . . Be careful!” Because it was so important to us. The music gave us many feelings. You felt that you were in your land. We were evacuated from my land. . . . At that time, everything for me was like a dream. Something I couldn’t touch with my hands.

Along with the music Umm Ali’s family sang together in the camp, stories had been key to keeping alight the flame of return. Now, with the air

of a wiser older sibling herself, and with her younger family members listening on, she relived times of rebellion through the words she sang in this, her second exile:

We went down to the streets and unfurled our banners  
We sang to my country the most beautiful songs  
Songs of freedom and national unity  
To the people's war, the path to victory

Be happy my country, the children are keeping watch  
For the eyes of the cause, with rocks in their hands.<sup>2</sup>

Umm Ali's nephew stopped playing for a moment to listen.

As we approached the land of my birth, it seemed that my love and I were racing towards each other for an eternal embrace. I rushed towards my beloved and saw Palestine for the first time since my forced exile in 1948. I was lost in a moment of passion and meditation. Then I remembered the mission and ordered the pilot to descend, and I addressed a message in Arabic to my fellow exiles in occupied Palestine, telling them we shall return and we shall recover the land.

—LEILA KHALED<sup>3</sup>

Lots has changed. . . . It was very difficult for women to leave the home. But now it's very easy. People agree and accept that. This is what I mean about music; we need a revolution.

—UMM ALI

The outbreak of intifada in 1987 shifted the frontlines of Palestinian resistance from Bilad al-Sham to areas colonized by the Israeli state in 1967, and especially to Gaza. Suffering particularly acute forms of Zionist warfare—and becoming an even greater regional focus of resistance and repression in the early twenty-first century—Gaza has been too easily overlooked in studies of culture and the transmission of Palestinian narratives. This chapter highlights discourses of *sumud* in musical experiences of the intifada through the memories of a refugee woman who felt the



social, political, and cultural effects of the uprising at home as a teenager, even as she could not join her older brothers in the street fighting.

Born in 1976, Umm Ali got into music in a serious way during her teens, in a politicized, communitarian environment. The intifada cemented her growing national consciousness, following a family journey to village land lost in the Nakba, and alongside a familial relationship to the PFLP. My analysis looks at what connections to the lands of historic Palestine featured in musical narratives before and during the intifada, and to the particular forms of music utilized in Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza. What were the barriers to or platforms for Umm Ali's singing? And what could the musical involvement of young women in the nationalist movement be seen to represent? Keeping post-intifada developments in mind, I ask whether musical relationships to nation and land still endure among urbanized refugees, and I discuss poetic and stylistic trends in a context where the right of return is disavowed by official leadership and physical journeys are blocked by the Zionist regime.

If the early intifada years meant the mass participation of women, as Sabbagh and others have shown,<sup>4</sup> my contention here is that the music of *sumud* and resistance opened up a certain space for the participation of young girls, paving the way for the involvement of a later generation of female musicians, who form part of the study in chapter 6's return to Gaza. Drawing in particular on the land-centered analysis of Amirah Silmi and on the memoirs of Palestinian Marxist Leila Khaled, I see the revolutionary edge of Palestinian nationalism as encompassing the struggle for Palestinian gender equality, suggesting that the "bridge" of communal singing, cassette tape circulation, and household upheaval, seen by Umm Ali as enabling her young involvement in the intifada, also served to redefine traditional roles. Situating her musical stories as *sumud* narratives, this chapter also questions ascriptions of land-based transmission as either imagined or chiefly nostalgic. Building in Silmi's reading of Marx and Fanon, I take seriously a growing up under colonization that arrives at revolutionary conclusions. Interrogating the individualized trajectory of post-Oslo versions of *sumud*, this examination of intifada-era singing reestablishes the position of women as central to collective narratives of working-class steadfastness in the camps.

Unlike others whose stories shape the chapters in this book, Umm Ali has rarely performed in public and does not aspire to a career in music. A

skilled amateur singer, her stage is her living room, in small gatherings of family and friends, and has been since her childhood in the 1980s. Her enthusiasm for Palestinian and Arab traditions, including music criticism, has meant that her life in music resembles that of a *sammi'a*, or a cultivated listener.<sup>5</sup> One difference with Racy's definition of the *sammi'a*, and related to artistic refugee camp communities identified in the Jordan and Lebanon, is my contention that the Palestinian refugees overcome its elitist connotations. Umm Ali presents a musicianship learned at street level in times of popular movement, and an affinity for resistance music that she continues to transmit.

Individual stories are, of course, never formed in isolation.<sup>6</sup> Like the outstanding intifada singers whose cassette releases gave voice to mass expression, and who were often themselves embedded in nationalist organizations relating to the movement on the streets, Umm Ali was part of a collective experience, offering narratives that help us to understand the involvement of camp dwellers in the uprising. In addition, her post-intifada experiences as a social worker, and her eventual travel into a second exile in Europe in 2010—including a period imprisoned in a British immigration detention center—have contributed to a drive to tell stories of Palestinian music from her perspective as a woman refugee.

### Gaza into the Intifada

The testimony of Umm Jabr Wishah, who lived in Bureij following the Nakba after fleeing Zionist terror at her home village of Bayt 'Affa, indicates that those arriving were among the poorest of the southern farming population (figure 8).<sup>7</sup> While some were able to create accommodation in concrete military barracks left by the British in Bureij and neighboring Nuseirat, most refugees inhabited tents, suffering disease and high infant mortality, and faced generations of joblessness and poverty. By Umm Ali's childhood, Gaza's eight camps had evolved into urban slums, with many homes divided by thin concrete walls under "zingo" (zinc rooftops). The two decades after the 1967 colonization were characterized by growing impoverishment and repression, exacerbating Gaza's position as a concentration of the internally displaced. Having the highest density of refugees in any location of Palestinian dispersal, and the largest recognized percentage of refugees,<sup>8</sup> unemployment had reached 40 percent by the 1987 intifada.



8. Um Jabr Wishah, third from left, leads a protest for political prisoners.  
Source: Eman Mohammed/Electronic Intifada. Ma'an News Agency.

Even though some Palestinians still found work in the Israeli economy, average incomes were one-ninth those of Israelis.<sup>9</sup>

Excursions were still possible, but movement had become more heavily policed by Zionist forces, an important factor in the observation that most music groups remained unknown outside of their local areas.<sup>10</sup> For a period from 1980, well-known northern vocalist Shafiq Kabha visited Gaza annually to sing at weddings, concerts, and rallies,<sup>11</sup> while other prominent musicians from other areas of Palestine were attracted by Gaza's energetic audience responses and rebellious reputation. Local musicianship increasingly existed under siege, kept in a state of underdevelopment and relying economically on DIY street mobilizations. Singing openly for Palestine, Nazareth-born Rim Banna had released her first cassettes but, according to Umm Ali, "she wasn't well known in Gaza," unlike the musicians of the Nakba generation, and notably revolutionary poet Abu Arab. Instrumentalists based in Gaza, including *oud*-playing vocalists Ziad Qasabughli, Salam Srour, and Atif Okasha, performed at weddings and other functions, whilst contributing to guerrilla recordings, and an informal but

prolific cassette trade. Umm Ali also remembers Palestinian *Nawar* (traveller community) musicians being regular performers at camp weddings as musicians and dancers, presenting traditional songs and Egyptian pop alongside *dabke* and *raqs sharqi*.

By the mid-1980s, new social forces had emerged across Palestine, born of youth frustration at repression, poverty, and life under occupation. On November 10, 1987, as schoolgirls gathered for a demonstration in Deir al-Balah, northern Gaza, colonial settlers attacked them, shooting seventeen-year-old Intissar in the head. Over 100 had been wounded by Zionist fire in the year prior, with twenty-four known to have been killed by the Israelis. Then, on December 8, four day-laborers were killed as an Israeli truck ran into them on their way home, officially igniting an uprising that would last five years.<sup>12</sup> Though not embodying liberal philosophies of “nonviolence” more recently promoted in the West,<sup>13</sup> the intifada was a largely unarmed grassroots movement by camp-dwelling refugees, inspiring new forms of struggle and community organization. Palestinian exile communities across the Middle East and internationally played a part in mobilizing solidarity and much-needed fundraising, while the leading role of women shaped the organization of social and political action on the ground.<sup>14</sup>

Bureij camp achieved local and international fame for its vivacity at the center of Gaza’s resistance, with barricades aflame and the rocks and Molotov cocktails of relentless working-class youth prompting occupying Israeli soldiers to wish they were back in Lebanon.<sup>15</sup> Umm Ali had family members who spent time in Israeli prisons during the intifada, including her brother Hamdi, and she lost relatives and neighbors to Zionist bullets. Bureij was the front line.<sup>16</sup> Yet, despite the seriousness of the times, and her mixed feelings about remembering, Umm Ali speaks of the love that the refugees had for each other, finding empowerment as revolutionary anger raged on the streets. In her narrative, the optimism brought by the intifada evoked an earlier moment in her childhood when she had visited her colonized paternal village. Al-Qubeiba was now brought to life through the singing of revolutionary anthems that lamented the division of the land, and imagined its liberation as an undivided whole. The following two sections explore this route into land, nationhood, and music before returning to discuss Umm Ali’s intifada repertoire.

***"Ana Mish Gazzawiyya": Al-Qubeiba Village and a Journey to the Intifada***

Sometimes I have a conflict within myself between Gaza and al-Qubeiba. When I talk with my friend from the West Bank, he tries to say to me "you're a Gazzawiyya!" [Gazan]. . . . I love Gaza, I feel that it is my place, my country. . . . But no, I'm not Gazzawiyya. My village is al-Qubeiba.

Umm Ali's early childhood was shaped by learning that the refugee camp in Gaza was not her family's original home, and in the mid-1980s she took part in an emotional family trip to al-Qubeiba, south of Yafa. During the uprising itself, stories and songs of historic Palestine would be central to her own involvement, as older relatives took to the streets in revolt. Umm Ali's relationship with the village offers detail on the social activities of second- and third-generation "Gazans"; in particular it shows the role of music in shaping Palestinian consciousness in the pre-intifada years.

"It was paradise really. A dream actually," Umm Ali says, emphasizing the natural abundance of the village compared to Gaza. As in a dream, the event came once and never happened again:

My dad and our relatives arranged a trip to our village. I think I was about seven. . . . It was easy for us to move before the intifada; it was not Israel, it was Palestine. At lunchtime, my family started to sing and my father also sang very old songs during the journey. I still like to remember that. It was a really nice time, really touching. I'd heard a lot about my village.

We still don't know exactly what happened in 1948. My grandfather heard what happened in the other villages, the killing, abuse of women. . . . They left thinking they would return after a week. . . . I don't know how my dad and our relatives could look at their house and see it in someone else's hands, not for them. And smell the oranges and lemons. . . . I don't know how they left it without having a heart attack, *wallahi* [by God!].

The journey was a story in itself: a small convoy of family cars, with Umm Ali's father, Abdel Salim, playing the role of the narrator. In her telling of the story, the village is mirage-like, holy, and it is clear that Abdel

Salim had already initiated the children into viewing the land he had left in 1948, at the age of five, as their own. In the car, he led singing of “Biktub ismik ya biladi” (I write your name, my country), by Lebanese songwriter Elie Shwery, and Palestinian rebel song “‘Al-raba’iyyeh.” The group continued to sing during a picnic on village land, in between eating slices of watermelon, surrounded by olive, pomegranate, and orange trees. While Umm Ali caught a bittersweet taste of an experience colored by childlike wonder, a contrasting scene is recounted by Leila Khaled, told by her mother on their arrival in Lebanon, that she must not eat the oranges: “Ours are in Haifa.”<sup>17</sup> Both experiences led the young girls to challenge the loss of their land.

“Biktub ismik” extols the beauty of an unnamed country under a never-setting sun and pledges to defend its honor. It visualizes the land, home, greenery, and bridges. While Umm Ali does not mention crossing a bridge to arrive at the village, bridges are thematic to Palestinian narratives,<sup>18</sup> and she would later use the metaphor to imagine her childhood involvement on the streets. The homeland is placed “above the highest bridge, the knights that enter it, and the swords are raised high.” In the context of al-Qubeiba, evacuated in 1948 by Zionist paramilitaries,<sup>19</sup> the lyrics elevate the land above its conquerors and their weapons. Its final verse appears almost prophetic of the journey taken by Umm Ali in adult life:

I will wander and search the world  
And cross the seven seas  
And recall your days, my country  
To return light to the earth.

Though the song was composed by Shwery during his time away from Lebanon in 1973, and was made a hit by singer Joseph Azhar, Umm Ali remembers learning its lyrics from Syrian actor Duraïd Lahham on a tiny black and white television.

The Israelis occupied the Golan and South Lebanon, the Shiba’a areas, so many in the Sham countries were with Palestine. We liked that people were talking about the things happening in their own countries, as well as about Palestine, about the revolution. At that time, we were all

refugees with no power. We liked that there was sympathy for us. We didn't have a voice.

The presence of non-Palestinian singers is typical of Umm Ali's pre-intifada reportage and of a broader post-Nakba period when Arab musicians released prominent solidarity pieces.<sup>20</sup> The artists encompassed *tarab*, cosmopolitan Lebanese pop, and traditional references to Bilad al-Sham. Umm Ali reports a growing hunger to find local musicians later on, although she also developed an affinity for Julia Boutros and Marcel Khalife (referring to both with first-name familiarity), along with Ahmad Kaabour, Fairuz, and Umm Kulthum:

We thought many of those people had Palestinian roots because they were singing to Palestine as their country.

"Al-raba'iyyeh"<sup>21</sup> had been recorded by revolutionary bands, but Umm Ali had not yet discovered their cassettes, and learned the song orally from family members. At her flat in Manchester, the sisters continued this tradition in front of their children, taking it in turns to initiate verses, with a unison refrain resembling *maqam bayat*. The music is credited to Iraqi actor and musician Kan'an Wadfi, with lyrics composed in colloquial Arabic by Palestinian poet and leading PLO member Said Khalil al-Muzayin (also known as Fata al-Thawra, "the boy of the revolution"),<sup>22</sup> who lived in Gaza after the Nakba:

'Al-raba'iyyeh, 'al-raba'iyyeh  
We do not sleep when we are oppressed

The road is long for those who honor it  
Oh branch-like rifle, soaked in sacrifice.

This widely circulated version was recorded in 1969 in an ensemble featuring *qanun* and traditional instrumental backing for a unison male chorus, and was the recording most likely to be known by Umm Ali's parents and older siblings. "Al-raba'iyyeh" had entered folkloric practices and existed in differing forms. Umm Ali and Umm Fadi remember two sets of

lyrics; the first is also known by the *shabab* in South Lebanon (see chapter 1). The second contains anonymously composed lyrics:

We hold our Palestinian heads up high  
My country, my country, we call out your name.

Other Gaza-based Palestinians recalled its ancient qualities and revolutionary certainty. Oud player Reem Anbar associated “‘Al-raba‘iyyeh” with steadfast *‘awjiz* (elderly people), while, for teacher Duaa Ahmed, it symbolized “victory.” Umm Ali reveals that she found positivity and optimism in the spirit of the song after her ordeal under the British Home Office:

‘Al-raba‘iyyeh is a nice song when you get out of jail.

Carried by its repeated chorus, the song enabled group participation, and Umm Ali remembers the family clapping hands and joining in together when they arrived at al-Qubeiba. Likewise, the “*la la la*” refrain of “*Biktub ismik*” supported its use as an anthem at Palestinian rallies in the *ghurba*.<sup>23</sup> In Umm Ali’s case, both songs were brought into new contexts and phases of Palestinian struggle. “‘Al-raba‘iyyeh,” sung by unison choruses at a time of rising armed struggle now entered a period and collective experience where *sumud* had become a central tactic, while imagery of the *fida’i* and rifle were interwoven with the olive branch. “*Biktub ismik*” was broadcast to the household via Lahham satirizing inept Arab leaders in “*Kasak ya watan*” (Cheers to the country).<sup>24</sup> Such leaders had already sidelined the claims of Palestinian refugees to the land but, singing songs that also carried revolutionary optimism, even after the scenes of PLO defeat in Lebanon, Umm Ali’s experience illuminated what was at stake in a shifting struggle for Palestine.

### Land, Music, and the Spirit of Resistance

They stopped me at the border, asking for my I.D.  
I told them, “It’s in Jaffa. My grandmother’s hiding it.”  
And with these words, the group split in two



One half carried whips, the other asked, "Where is it?"  
 "In Palestine," I cried, and they split me in two  
 One half at the border, one half in my grandmother's breast  
 –MARCEL KHALIFE, "AT THE BORDER"<sup>25</sup>

Some in Gaza would laugh at my accent because I say *gal* instead of 'al  
 [for the Arabic letter *qaf*].<sup>26</sup> But I'm a *fellahi* and proud of it!  
 –UMM ALI

Central to *sumud* narratives in the liberation movement had been the figure of the steadfast peasant, presenting rootedness and perseverance in the face of Zionist ascendancy. As Swedenburg argues, "the peasantry's prominence as a signifier must be seen in the context of the Palestinian confrontation with a specific form of settler-colonialism."<sup>27</sup> Works of committed Palestinian artistry, including those accessed by Umm Ali, suggest that images of *fellahi* empowerment and *sumud* came to coexist alongside the reemergence of armed struggle in the Palestinian revolution of the 1960s.<sup>28</sup> The drawings of cartoonist Naji al-Ali illustrate the critique, commitment, and land-rooted thought at the heart of this message. In one cartoon from 1980, an elderly, moustached farmer wearing a peasant *hatta* and *i'gal* is sketched protecting his plant, labeled "livelihood," in the face of colonial settlement blocks and military bulldozers.<sup>29</sup> Another, published in April 1987, shows the child-witness Handala, leading a barefoot peasant couple by the strap of an AK-47 rifle, plowing land branded as Israel with its bayonet, and sowing it with heart-shaped seeds of "devotion, belonging, and resistance."<sup>30</sup>

Sharing phrases used by other displaced Palestinians, Umm Ali describes al-Qubeiba as a "paradise" or "dream,"<sup>31</sup> building a narrative of home that emphasizes the endurance in collective thought. The themes of praising the fruits and natural qualities of the land, its fertility, and past prosperity are indistinct to the Palestinian experience and are prominent in nostalgic defenses of rural pasts against a range of phenomena in the capitalist era.<sup>32</sup> After the Nakba, according to Feldman, memories of *ayyam al-balad* (village days) and the *hijra* (exodus) focused on the first displaced generation, with attachments persisting "in the face of ongoing political defeat."<sup>33</sup> In Gaza, remembering carries the knowledge of more than fifty years of dispossession that followed 1948. Feldman refers to "perpetuating

sorrows” shaping transmissions of village life. Seen as *sumud* narratives, which Khalili sees as implicitly optimistic, valorizing the nation’s endurance in dire circumstances,<sup>34</sup> politicized visions of rootedness set a challenge to narratives emphasizing victimhood and tragedy. We see in the musical recollections of Umm Ali and her familial and *jabha*-influenced repertoires of the 1980s a collective experience of singing that helped to lift spirits and form part of a communal arsenal of cultural material that Umm Ali saw as enabling her participation in the intifada. Musical stories of the land, and the visit to al-Qubeiba itself, combined in this formative process.

Drawing on the writings of Marx on Ireland and Fanon on Algeria, Silmi charts the externality of colonial oppression and exploitation as the basic condition for an emerging anticolonial struggle.<sup>35</sup> Repression by the colonizing power targets the lifestyle of the peasants, which threatens capitalism’s objective of turning the labor power of the broader masses into commodities. Resistance to such colonial impositions serves as one explanation of the role of farmers in revolution. For Fanon, peasants were simultaneously a bulwark of traditional, “community-minded” social structure in a colonial society<sup>36</sup> and a potentially revolutionary class, with nothing to lose and everything to gain.<sup>37</sup> Kanafani reflected on the ability of Palestinian *fellahin* to inspire others: in the 1936–39 revolution against British imperialism, the peasants “represented legendary heroism” in the eyes of the masses.<sup>38</sup> The worker–peasant alliances shaping victories in Vietnam and Algeria were fresh in the minds of Kanafani, Khaled, and other Palestinian revolutionaries rebuilding the national movement in the 1960s, while Cuba and Latin American socialist and anti-imperialist confrontations would also inspire political and artistic forms.

The positions of Palestinian leftists were developed through Marxist readings on nineteenth-century Ireland, where the land-based Fenian movement had prompted Marx and Engels to rethink their position on where the “lever” would be applied to defeat the colonial power.<sup>39</sup> Military occupation, colonial landlordism, displacement, and impoverishment of the rural classes had led to questions of land appearing at the center of the Irish revolution.<sup>40</sup> “The Irish question,” orated Marx, “is therefore not simply a question of nationality, but a question of land and existence. Ruin or revolution is the watchword.”<sup>41</sup> Following this logic, Silmi writes:

Connecting to the land means clinging to life with all its power. . . . This connection constitutes the condition in which the colonized find their ability to resist the forces of false civilization and its tamed effects. The revolution itself finds its flame when this connection is jeopardized.<sup>42</sup>

Responding to Jean Genet's assertion that the Palestinian nation's "essential substance" of land was a fantasy intended to protect a dream of revolution,<sup>43</sup> Silmi points out that "uprooting, in reality, is neither a fantasy nor an illusion," but "an open wound," borrowing Kanafani's phrase. Based on a fundamentally material, rather than primarily imagined, reality, Palestinians' "relationship to the earth is the true source of resistance spirit."<sup>44</sup>

For the period in study, refugees in Gaza remained deeply committed to seeing their lost land as their objective, maintaining national imagery toward liberating Palestine's rural heritage. In the Bureij camp of Umm Ali's youth, the cramming together of a cross-section of society in conditions characterized by enveloping humanitarian crisis, questions of food production and agriculture remained flashpoints of struggle. When the intifada came, the cultivation of the land was cooperativized as women's groups in particular took control of food distribution, as Palestinians boycotted Israeli-sold produce.<sup>45</sup> More recently, the total imposition of Israeli "borders" around Gaza have made village visits like Umm Ali's impossible, forcing the question of return back onto the agenda of Palestinian protest movements.

While the musical poetics of many anticolonial movements may have been unashamedly romantic in their lyrical depictions of the homeland, the discussion above suggests that historic contexts are important in understanding why. The pre-intifada singing and storytelling of Umm Ali's family contributed to a consciousness that she was "not Gazzawiyya," forming a connection to an abundant land that looked and felt freer than the cramped impoverishment of Bureij camp: "It's all Palestine, but in al-Qubeiba you got a different feeling." Songs like "Biktub ismik," which spoke of unparalleled beauty, or revolutionary material that compared rifles to branches linked ideas of *sumud* and resistance to scenes that Umm Ali found compelling. I see the processes by which such lyrical concepts were embraced as expressive of the material realities of "Gazzawi" relationships to land, representing musical equivalents of the casual demands

made by characters in Naji al-Ali cartoons. Both took on new lives in the intifada.

### One Girl's Bridge to the Intifada: Diamonds from the Streets of the Stones

For me, learning these songs was a way of being involved. It was like a bridge. I was very sensitive to what was happening.

—UMM ALI

If, unlike her older brothers, Umm Ali could not stand on the front line, she still identifies herself as being part of the generation of the stones, “involved” through listening and singing the songs of the intifada. Her description of music being a bridge to her involvement echoes the lyrics of “Biktub ismik” and other songs of her earlier years; she desperately wanted to be a part of the struggle of the present. In her musical stories of the first intifada, which began when she was ten years old, Umm Ali does not view herself as a bystander to historic events but talks in the first-person plural about her place in the Palestinian experience: “The songs from the intifada meant a lot. . . . We were focused at that time on revolution.”

As remembered during the sketch at the beginning of this chapter, a typical performance space for Umm Ali's family would be an evening sat around the *argileh* pipe, with family members joining in storytelling—ranging from anecdotes of village life to fresh dispatches from the intifada front—which invariably included listening to cassettes, group singing, sometimes accompanied by Umm Ali's brother Ibrahim on keyboard. “My dad had a good voice,” she remembers, and she saw songs like “Kano thalath rijal” (“There were three men”; known more widely as “Min sijn ‘Akka”—“From Akka prison”<sup>46</sup>) as “history lessons”:

Since 1987, the first intifada, we started to listen to music about Palestine. . . . Listen! Those songs let you move, make you feel something because they are singing about your country and about your history, your everything. You can taste every word.

“Sabbil ‘Uyunu” was an old wedding song found across Bilad al-Sham, existing in multiple variations of its basic poetic theme and simple melody, again around *maqam bayat*. It had been recorded for Lebanese TV in 1973

by Samira Tawfiq, dressed as a *fellahi* bride, surrounded by embroidered blankets, and actors in peasant garb. Associated with the groom's *hammam* and *henna* ceremonies, this song appeared at traditional weddings in Palestine. Umm Ali learned two versions and claps as she sings a common refrain:

He fluttered his eyes and held out his hand for *henna*  
His waist thin as they wrapped a belt around him

He fluttered his eyes and put his hand on my head  
His waist thin as he said goodbye to me. I will not forget.

Verses depict a groom leaving his maternal home, and are voiced from the perspective of a heavy-hearted mother bidding her son goodbye. In one stanza, he asks her to stuff a cushion for him, as she complains, “he left the house without a goodbye, my sisters.” Umm Ali’s recollection of singing a second version, as recorded by al-Ashiqeen (figure 9), suggests a different reading. Recorded in Syria as events unfolded back home, the



9. Al-Ashiqeen recorded and performed in Damascus in the 1980s. Cassette distribution boosted their following in Gaza. Photograph supplied by the band.

lyrics spoke to events on the ground, carrying the subtitle “The Martyr’s Anthem.” The refrain and spoken introduction are performed by male vocalists, with verses sung in alternation by *sabaya*, or young women:

He fluttered his eyes and greeted his love, oh dark skinned one  
His waist thin and his belt made from dew and *za‘tar*

He fluttered his eyes and held his hand out from the grave  
His waist thin and his ways a bitter perdition

He fluttered his eyes and greeted his people  
His waist thin, my people, prepare for him the food

He fluttered his eyes and said, “I must leave”  
His waist thin as he neared the hiding place.

Male and female voices come together for an end chorus, with imagery of eyelashes, *henna*, and belts combining both rural wedding traditions and the guerrilla struggle. While it continued to be sung at weddings, the song would also come to represent life-and-death struggle in post-intifada arrangements.<sup>47</sup> Umm Ali associates “Sabbil ‘Uyunu” with her familial journey into the revolutionary whirlwind:

It reminds me of the first resistance. When my brothers started to work with the Jabha Sha‘biya, when they covered their eyes and went out.

Here, Umm Ali conjures up imagery of young men who wrapped their faces in the red and white *kuffieh* of Palestinian leftists, saying goodbye to their proud families, with the promise of bringing news of the uprising back home with them. Hamdi was arrested at the age of seventeen and became “even more committed” to the PFLP as a political prisoner, says Umm Fadi. Connotations of “leaving without saying goodbye” in the lyrics to “Sabbil ‘Uyunu” spoke to this experience, which immersed whole families and neighborhoods in anti-Zionist confrontation on the streets of the camp. Umm Ali recalls that “all my brothers liked to sing,” and that they would frequently be joined by comrades, who would bring new cassettes back and sing along with Umm Ali and her father. Coming back home

at all, however, was by no means a given; over 300 Palestinians were killed by Zionist repression in 1988 alone, while the deliberate policy of breaking bones gained notoriety.<sup>48</sup>

Reflecting on the intifada repertoire, Umm Ali felt that this was “not a time for love songs, not when people were suffering.” At the same time, the intifada “brought people together,” and the community around Bureij “loved each other.” Also associated with revolutionary leftism, “Nizilna ‘al-shawari” spoke to the optimism brought by new generations of Palestinian fighters. The lyrics identified the joys of the homeland with the youth of Palestine fighting Israeli soldiers with stones, written from the perspective of youths involved in the intifada. Here, every petrol bomb thrown at the occupying force was a song of beauty and freedom, nourishing the country itself, and pledging that children would become its guardians. Written and recorded by songwriter and *oud* player Walid Abdalsalam, “Nizilna ‘al-shawari” became an anthem of the intifada and made its way to Gaza through grassroots cassette duplication, originating in Jerusalem. The album “Min dar li-dar”<sup>49</sup> (From home to home) had been recorded three years prior in a secret recording session at Birzeit University, supervised by Sabreen founder Said Murad. Walid remembers:

It wasn’t necessary or possible to produce something of high studio quality, particularly as the situation was so unsafe and we didn’t want the occupation to uncover the recording base . . . This was before the intifada but there were mass risings of the masses, smaller intifadas, with stones, confrontations, and songs. Like the recordings, the distribution took place in secret . . . those who carried the cassettes had to hide them like you would a weapon, or they would be arrested and beaten.<sup>50</sup>

Speaking to the influence of Egyptian resistance singer Sheikh Imam, a comrade of Walid from his time studying in Cairo, “Nizilna ‘al-shawari” is musically simple, arranged with *oud*, *tabla*, and hand claps. The songwriter was a student organizer at the university and recruited male and female voices to join in the chorus. In the song, lyricist As‘ad al-As‘ad refers to the *wlad* as the guardians “keeping watch” over the nation and encourages the *farah* (joy) of its people through mass struggle. While *wlad*, strictly speaking, means “boys,” in this context its meaning is more inclusive, translated more appropriately as “kids” or “children.” Umm Ali may

have picked up on this phrase as an invitation to join the ranks of the intifada. Like “Sabbil ‘Uyunu,” arranged by al-Ashiqeen, female voices feature in unity with collective messages of solidarity and steadfastness at the heart of the lyrical symbolism.

As households like Umm Ali’s embraced the “home to home” intifada cassette craze, Abdalsalam continued to record on the theme of childhood<sup>51</sup>—a cause taken up enthusiastically by other musicians. Outside Palestine, Lebanese Ahmad Kaabour had been part of a group of singers “saying the things we wanted to say.” With lyrics by communist poet Tawfiq Zayyad, “Unadikum” (I’m calling out to you all) was an anthem of the intifada years and remains part of Palestinian protest song repertoire. But, attesting to Umm Ali’s newfound obsession with music—and to the level of detail through which she’d trawl through her brother’s cassettes, which she saw as “diamonds”—she found herself attracted to “Ismahu al-awwal Nabil” (His first name is Nabil), a later track on Kaabour’s *Unadikum* album. The song personified visions of the revolutionary struggle:

His first name is Nabil  
 And his identity:  
 An Arab leader and hero  
 He plants and grows the other heroes  
 In the belly of the pregnant land  
 A shape of freedom  
 A color of revolution.

This chorus is inclusive, with lines lacking the definite article *al* suggesting that Nabil could be anyone, anywhere in the Arab communities of the downtrodden. Nabil plants the seeds for other revolutionaries to grow, also carrying a musical internationalism, with a lilting 6/8 guitar ostinato somewhat reminiscent of Latin American protest song.

The neighborhood performance space and socialistic environment generated by the intifada in Bureij enabled Umm Ali to be an active participant in a group exploring song, politics and shared visions of a liberated Palestine. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra had written:

Our land is an emerald,  
 But in deserts of exile,



Spring after spring,  
Only dust hisses in our faces.<sup>52</sup>

Treating mass-produced tapes as diamonds elevated their content from their physical vulnerability, finding hope under siege. Of the same generation as Umm Ali, growing up in neighboring Nuseirat, Ramzy Baroud recalls:

We'd hide the tapes of Marcel and Sabreen as though they were drugs . . . we'd rush for the cassettes if the Israelis turned up.

Carried by traditionalized and cosmopolitan sounds, the themes addressed in Umm Ali's highlighted songs mediated the uncertainty of intifada life for a young generation, but transmitted implicit qualities of *sumud* that Umm Ali latched onto: "singing made me feel powerful." Performing did not come without its barriers and limitations for Umm Ali as she entered her teenage years. As she sang the nationalist struggle and embraced socialist ideals, how did Umm Ali's experiences as a young woman fit with the generalized experiences of Palestinian women?

### Gender, Class, and Nation in the Palestinian Revolution

Socialist fighter Leila Khaled would continue to be a source of inspiration for Umm Ali, who saw her as presenting "such a calm, clear position," uncompromised "unlike [Mahmoud] Abbas and the others." Influenced by such leftist ideas as an adult, Umm Ali offered an often stinging critique of the failures of negotiations for the Palestinian people, positioning herself as a *bint al-watan* (daughter of the nation), attending protests and meetings, and maintaining an interest in other international causes—she spoke highly of Cuba and of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. Chronicler of the Nakba, Umm Jabr Wishah had also been a family neighbor in Bureij, and impressed Umm Ali through her solidarity work with Palestinian political prisoners, which included accompanying Umm Ali's mother to visit Hamdi in jail.

We have seen so far that Umm Ali experienced music as a formative process of her childhood in Gaza, embracing anthems of *sumud* and resistance, and seeing her singing as a bridge to being involved in the intifada. In the wider social environment of the uprising, women from the camps, as well

as from rural and urban locations, joined and organized street confrontations, marches, sit-ins, and other activities.<sup>53</sup> Women, including some adolescent and younger girls, were physically beaten by occupation troops, many while protecting their homes and men from arrest or brutality, and imprisoned women faced sexual abuse and psychological torture.<sup>54</sup> In a revolutionary situation, mundane acts of health care and funerals became demonstrations of solidarity, with women leading campaigns for self-reliance and localized production, bypassing Palestinian dependence on a Zionist economy.<sup>55</sup>

Edward Said observed that women had come “to the fore as equal partners in the struggle.”<sup>56</sup> In its most radical moments in Gaza, the intifada also questioned traditional values and expectations of women in the home. According to Suha Sabbagh, men took up household chores, while women poured out of the private sphere of the home and into the streets, in a “transformation of consciousness,” challenging “exclusion from the public sphere.”<sup>57</sup> Umm Ali reports that her mother had initially tried to prevent her daughters from singing at home—“she was religious and worried what the neighbors would think.” But she was helped along by her father and older brother; the early intifada brought “a revolution in the house . . . we didn’t give up,” and she won the argument.

Umm Jabr, Leila Khaled, and Umm Ali represent different generations of women committed to the Palestinian cause, who express this dedication in contrasting but interlinked ways, as community worker, cadre of a revolutionary organization, and amateur musician and activist. The women all came from families displaced by the Nakba, and a significant backdrop to their stories of politicization came with the Arab defeat of 1967 and the developing Palestinian revolution, later reoriented from Bilad al-Sham toward the social explosion of the displaced in Palestine. The roles of women in histories of this period are subject to a range of analyses in Palestinian and Western academic discourse; as Muaddi Darraj points out in her discussion of intifadas in the West Bank and Gaza, “feminism and nationalism have always had a concurrent and parallel history.”<sup>58</sup> Islah Jad terms as “feminist-nationalist projects” the “vibrant women’s movement, which had managed to mobilize large numbers of both urban and rural women” during the first intifada.<sup>59</sup> Music was a central practice of intifada organization and women’s voices were given prominence compared to earlier periods of Palestinian recording.<sup>60</sup>

Silmi views Western academic research on gender in Palestine as tending toward the predetermined conclusion that women's participation in Palestinian resistance has not resulted in any gains, but rather furthers exploitative relationships.<sup>61</sup> Echoing the work of Lila Abu-Lughod, Shalhoub-Kevorkian sees that in imperialist discourse, violence against Palestinian women is explained as "culturalized," or springing from an inherently violent traditional culture.<sup>62</sup> The role of women in movements of the nationally oppressed is also seen as primarily determined by culture.

Leila Khaled arrives at a historical materialist view of nationalism, both through her narration of political consciousness and in later interventions in leftist forums. While espousing both Marxist and pan-Arab ideals, her early writing offers a unique critique of the petit-bourgeois nationalisms of social democratic Baathism and late Nasserism as "glossing over" the mass mobilization and social theory needed to build socialism. Overcoming regional crisis meant fighting for a "revolutionary instrument for the transformation of Arab society,"<sup>63</sup> not for privileges for putschist elites. This class standpoint is the basis for the socialist position on the right of nations to self-determination, developed from Marx and Engels's work on Ireland and summarized by Reed, who argues against the rejection of the nationalism of oppressed nations by self-described "internationalists," seeing such struggles as essential to the defeat of imperialism.<sup>64</sup>

Khaled would later give a sense of the debate at the heart of the Marxist current in the Palestinian movement in the 1970s: "During the struggle we could break many old ideas and many traditions in society and in the party, but it was very difficult, for the party and for us."<sup>65</sup> For her, convincing male cadres to accept female leadership as part of a comradely discipline was more important than discussions over who would wash the dishes. Khaled saw women as being "looked upon as second-class citizens," and sought to challenge this position by joining the revolution, bearing arms, and taking part in missions on equal terms with men. This meant participating in both "the national struggle and also in the social struggle."<sup>66</sup>

In Algeria, Fanon saw the new woman emerging from the death of colonialism.<sup>67</sup> Like Che's "new man and woman,"<sup>68</sup> born from the material foundations of revolution, and Kanafani's "new Palestinian,"<sup>69</sup> she would emerge and break the boundaries of imperialist underdevelopment. Tracing Fanon's arguments, and following the works of Assia Djebar on the struggles of women in postliberation Algeria, Silmi advocates for a constant process

of revision, linking the injustices of the past with the present in a “continuous exchange,” whereby women envision different forms and horizons of life, preventing their confinement within walls that are visible or otherwise.<sup>70</sup> Feminism, in this case, cannot be based only on the “individual self” if it is to be a freedom struggle. Also emphasizing visibility, Leila Khaled saw part of her duty “to be the voice of women, those who nobody sees.”<sup>71</sup> In the intifada, young women were staking their claim to be seen on the streets, facing the force of Zionist state repression in the process. In her own terms, Umm Ali was empowered by her musical role in Bureij camp.

By 1998, with a PLO leadership in retreat, Sabbagh asked whether the prominence of women could be long lasting, with a parallel retreat of the women’s movement. Jad mused on where the feminist-nationalist vibrancy had gone in the post-Oslo years, questioning processes of NGOization in particular.<sup>72</sup> Challenging Said’s views on the equality of intifada struggle, Massad sees the containment of women’s liberation as “a political move that compromised very little nationalist ideology.”<sup>73</sup> Umm Ali’s experience suggests the endurance of casual changes that accompanied the street resistance, and emphasizes her mother’s acceptance of her daughters’ singing and, shortly after the intifada, Umm Ali’s own divorce. The latter happened with the support of her brother Hamdi, whose prison experiences “opened his mind toward women.” Umm Ali adds that divorce became less of a stigma, and that there was a new openness to women’s working, and concludes that “values and people have changed.” The implication is that nationalist struggle enabled rather than held back such social phenomena.

Posited toward Algerian women, Silmi asks what happens when the revolution ceases. Gaza has remained the center of the Palestinian movement, yet a thoroughgoing national crisis has seen peaks and troughs of resistance. At the same time, the potentialities of victory and liberation are glimpsed in the revolutionary waves of intifada, of which Gaza’s working-class refugee women have been central actors. Keeping intifada histories alive is a process of revision. It is telling that the songs of liberation learned in Umm Ali’s childhood are still sung in her family today.

### **Memories of Youth: Music as a Tool of Collective Resistance**

The intifada was not simply a backdrop to the upbringings of Umm Ali and her siblings. To borrow a phrase from Brown and Yaffe on South Africa,

youth solidarity movements and anticolonial networks, activists “grew up *through* their political engagement.”<sup>74</sup> Coming of age and political struggle were interrelated in the case of the Bureij camp refugees, where commitments to leftist nationalism were shaped by the core practice of singing, overcoming barriers of colonial underdevelopment. I have argued in this chapter that the particular social environment of youth involvement in the movement on the streets shaped Umm Ali’s understanding of how she could be involved, and I see in the musical and lyrical content of resistance anthems a drive to liberation and social revolution. The cassette tape repertoires of struggle expanded by *jabhawi* (PFLP) activism carried strong referents to familial stories, shaped by the event of visiting al-Qubeiba, a village standing in contrast to Gaza’s cramped urban poverty. Coming decades later, the March of Return confirmed that land and return are central to struggles against displacement in Gaza.

Returning to a theme of chapter 1, what happens to cosmopolitanism during an uprising conceived around land and nation? While more present in Umm Ali’s stories of later years—particularly as a tool of musical therapy for women after 1993—the regional sounds of Cairo pop, Warda, and Umm Kulthum are largely absent from Umm Ali’s narrative of the early intifada years, replaced by Palestinian names or by Lebanese and Syrian artists who released music in solidarity with Palestine. This does not mean that the strongly felt Egyptian cultural influence on Gaza went away or that revolutionary anthems carried sway across the risen land in equal measure, but the stories of this Bureij family are illustrative of the meaningful communal performance practices of leftist groupings. There is a level of national unity in this approach—indeed, bands like al-Ashiqeen are associated with Fatah; but their music was sung and enjoyed more broadly. Khaled Barakat and Ramzy Baroud both remember cultural presentations of different factions as being largely indistinguishable in terms of stylistic or thematic focus.<sup>75</sup> Abu Arab, a socialist, had similar mass appeal.

At the same time, the Palestinian and *Sham*-region artists mentioned in this chapter embraced certain musical cross-fertilizations which may be deemed cosmopolitan. Examples include the aesthetic internationalism of Ahmad Kaabour, or in synthesized renditions of “Sabbil ‘Uyunu,” with cosmopolitanism nationalized at the crossroads of a struggle for national liberation, or internationalized through socialist-orientated trends in the movement to liberate Palestine.<sup>76</sup> The new human beings of Fanon, Che,

and Kanafani expressed culture with liberated tools. At the same time, the songs and arrangements discussed balance newly contextualized versions of folk or protest repertoire with a drive to preserve traditional heritage, evidenced by the presence of *mijwiz* and *oud* in many of the recordings. Explored in detail in the following chapter, aesthetic and narrative repetition and revolutionization share dialectical relationships.

I see the balancing acts of genre and narrative as related to Umm Ali's description of a revolution at home, occurring alongside the leading role of women in the intifada. As an official tactic of the PLO, *sumud* had promoted the resilience of women in holding the family and community together. As Meari argues, *sumud* is linked to the struggles of political prisoners as a collective tool of resisting Zionist colonialism<sup>77</sup> and, featuring music and communal self-education, finds effectiveness in its politicized, campaigning qualities. This chapter rejects notions that revolutionary trends in the nationalist movement are fundamentally masculine. Like Umm Jabr, the inspiring prisoner solidarity activist of Bureij, and Leila Khaled, whose analysis and practical example are also championed in Umm Ali's discourse, Umm Ali herself strived to be a part of the resistance. Negotiating the space opened up at home by the uprising as a child and early teen, she remarked on the "love" at the heart of her social experience, which involved singing with comrades in her siblings' circles of action.

Coming later in her life, Umm Ali's story of *sumud* is told in times when her space had changed. However, the musical and narrative tools she employs offer a continuation with the legacy of popular resistance at the heart of the national movement during the intifada. Or, put differently by Nahla Abdo, "memorialization" creates continuity, consciously and unconsciously transmitting the past and transcending the present.<sup>78</sup> Umm Ali's sense of *sumud* continues to reinscribe the role of women as leaders in musical transmission, while carrying messages of leftist critique toward the capitulationist regime that followed. With Gaza blockaded and bombed into the early twenty-first century, the concepts of land, revolution, and *sumud* reverberate with urgency.

## CHAPTER 4

# Smashing the Pyramids: Encores of Palestinian Radicalism in Egypt

Tamer Abu Ghazaleh, the Cairo Underground,  
and the Sabreen Influence

**T**he musical career of Tamer Abu Ghazaleh was born of displacement; he got into singing and performing through his parents' exile in Egypt, journeying back to Palestine, and being uprooted again with the Israeli siege of Ramallah during the intifada in 2002. A traveling musician, relying on gigs as an income, he frequently brings avant-garde sounds from underground Cairo to Europe and the wider Arab world. A typical show in Manchester, northern England, on April 16, 2015, with a band of musicians living between continents, took place in an underground basement, packed with around fifty young and older pro-Palestine activists, second-generation Arabs, and alternative music fans. There were political stalls from solidarity campaigners and the Revolutionary Communist Group, as music fans mingled with street picketers in a unique social gathering, given that Palestinian musical events are a rarity in the city.

Captured in distorted photographs and short video clips of the concert shared between friends, the group played with high energy, with band and audience visibly perspiring. In one fan shot by Ronaya Gedal, Tamer is pictured wearing jeans and sweater, with eyes closed, face tilted skywards, fingers a blur on the *oud* neck, lit by the one set of "stage" lights; the flat basement floor made sure there was no physical elevation of band over audience and dancers came close to the performers. There was something punk about the show, and *oud* player Khyam Allami appeared on drums, as he had as a youth in the London punk scene of the 1990s. The use of space in "Hubb" (Love) and other numbers from the new *Thulth* (Third) album (figure 10) brought a sense of anticipation, with audience silence, interrupted conversations, or exclamations between rhythmic stops.



10. Tamer Abu Ghazaleh, *Thulth* album artwork, 2016.  
Photograph by Omar Mostafa, courtesy of the artist.

Before the gig and a quick soundcheck, Tamer told me about learning how to “break the laws” of tradition from the generation of Palestinian musicians involved with the pioneering Sabreen band, and said that, while he saw his early singing of songs from the Palestinian folk heritage as important, he had grown “bored of creating songs I’d heard before.” For new rebellions in music, there could be no repetition. Using the phrases “something new,” and “somewhere new” as sonic destinations for his music, Tamer voiced a narrative he would develop elsewhere, seeing the “playground” of musical genres linked to the need for a “new ecosystem” for cultural exploration and economic “change” to challenge big-label domination<sup>1</sup> and the marginalization of nonmainstream music.

But something curious happened as Tamer’s set drew to a close. Vocally ecstatic and demanding more, the audience brought the group back to the performance space for an encore; they had, in fact, not left the room as the venue offered no backstage area. Bashfully smiling, Tamer told the crowd that “we only have one album!” and led the band in a repetition of the same song they had played at the end of their setlist. Breaking convention, they repeated “Takhabot” (Clamor) with Tamer singing self-penned lyrics to a composition with frequent time and tempo changes:

The onion thundered, the cloud rolling  
and I was burned by the sun



The rain rose, drank a drop, the cloud still rolling  
and I was burned by the sun.<sup>2</sup>

The *Thulth* album was not the first time “Takhabot” had been recorded, now rearranged with drums, bass, and layered vocals; it had previously been sung to only percussive *oud* and Shadi El Hosseiny’s piano on the 2008 album *Mir’ah* (Mirror). Also set to film by Beirut-based animator Ghassan Halwani, “Takhabbut” spoke to the repetitive continuousness of “political and social-economic chaos . . . increasing day after day,”<sup>3</sup> with scenes conjuring an uneasy relationship between the subject and environment; monochrome skyscrapers and cranes appear lifeless next to the people who observe them. In the Manchester encore, Tamer was animated in body and voice, jerking bent knees in rhythm, raising his voice to breaking point, while adding melodic ornaments to repeated lines in Palestinian Arabic:<sup>4</sup>

Sunny, that day was  
though the sun had a drink  
forgot to rise, forgot to sink.

The audience did not complain that they had heard the same song again and called for another encore.<sup>5</sup> Modestly, Tamer smiled and declined.

Those were such fine days, so wonderful and pure  
When the melodies sang of loyalty and devotion.  
—“YA LUUR AHUBBUKI” (OH LAURE, I LOVE YOU), TRADITIONAL

During interviews with myself and others, Tamer Abu Ghazaleh depicts a restless quest for creative renewal in his Cairo base, allied to a commitment to finding space for artistic expression and challenging corporate monopoly. Important phrases such as “movement” and “alternative” recur alongside “searching” and “experimenting,” in ways comparable to the repetition of poetic, lyrical, or musical motifs for structural effect. On the surface, the concept of recurrence may seem anathema to musical or non-musical ideas with stated and perceptible aims of breaking with what has gone before, of revolutionizing, and overthrowing existing form, content, and space.

According to Khaled Jubran, a “Sabreen generation” composer and musician,<sup>6</sup> and mentor to Tamer and early bandmate Huda Asfour in early 2000s Ramallah and Cairo, “there are no references for Palestinian music,” and “no pyramids,” or Egyptian-style musical archetypes. The Nakba prevented a *maqam* tradition from further developing in Palestine, making revolutions in music all the more necessary. At the same time, survivalist tendencies draw on social and cultural heritage, bringing revolution and popular tradition together.<sup>7</sup> A closer listen shows that the *buzuq*, *oud*, vocal, or compositional frames of reference for Tamer and Huda are, indeed, steeped in *maqam* tradition. Repetition and renewal seem magnetically attached after all.

For Said, present narratives of the past are imperative in the Palestinian case: “It is as if the activity of repeating prevents us, and others, from skipping us or overlooking us entirely.”<sup>8</sup> Existing in varied forms in movements of resistance, oral histories, musical and other cultural fields, for Palestine, the concept of repetition endures. There are certain parallels in wider Arab traditions too, notably in iterative forms, in Islam, and poetry. In *tarab* heritage, music becomes the mode for inducing collective emotion, with repetitive phrases part of the feedback mechanism between audience and musicians, most famously with Egyptian icon Umm Kulthum. That this sociomusical relationship faces extinction is one reflection of a culture perceived to be in crisis alongside broader contradictions leading to the revolutionary movement of 2011, to post-/counterrevolutionary Egypt, and, arguably, the 1967 defeat,<sup>9</sup> still unresolved. Where do the underground or alternative interventions of Palestinian musicians in Egypt’s urban centers stand in relation to paradoxical positions of repetition and renewal? What have they gained from their exilic experience, aesthetically and politically, and what contributions do they make to broader movements?

Rather than offering a comprehensive history of grassroots music making in Egypt, this chapter homes in on a period around 2002, when a teenage Tamer had migrated back to Cairo. With the uprising raging in Palestine, he and other students of Khaled Jubran were compelled to reflect on the musical directions of their work and its political meaning. Seeing Said’s assertion as a starting point for understanding such processes, the theoretical material of this chapter delves into “activities of repeating” and their seeming opposites, situating a Palestinian search for new modes of expression and new spaces for performance within an Egypt questioning

its own direction. This analysis is deepened by way of Marxist and Saidian views of repetition and revolutionary crisis. Utilizing a range of ethnographic materials, including interviews, live concerts, photographs, and videos, along with analysis of music and lyrics, I argue that poles of repetition and renewal expressed in the music and its messages are expressive of dialectical processes that were taking place in both Palestine, a site of revolutionary anticolonialism, and Egypt, where a revolutionary movement was on the horizon. Offering reflections on post-2011 trajectories, and following the work of Reem Abou-El-Fadl<sup>10</sup> and Jack Shenker, this chapter reiterates the centrality of Palestinian liberation upon a crisis engulfing Egypt and the wider world.

Beginning by charting Tamer's early musicianship up to the Jehar (Loudspeaker) project with Huda and Khaled, I move onto discussing the cultural and broader significance of an unsettled Egypt as a location for developing an alternative music philosophy, before theorizing themes of historic and aesthetic repetition. To conclude, I offer reflections on concepts of musical alternatives in regional contexts.

### **From the *Kuffieh* and Cassette to the *Buzuq* and Loudspeaker**

My mother had founded a Palestinian choir in Cairo, singing traditional songs and songs that spoke about the current situation back then. Since I was a little child, I was involved in the choir. . . . I started singing along and became interested in instruments and it came from there. "Mawtini" is the earliest song I can remember, and "Ya zalam al-sijn khayyim" [Oh darkness of the prison over us].

–TAMER

I told them that I came for one reason: "To be musically victorious over Tel Aviv." That was the vision for me, honestly.

–KHALED

Musical memories of Tamer Abu Ghazaleh's childhood are well preserved, with recordings, videos, photographs, and news clippings documenting the starring role he earned within the 'Abbad al-Shams (Sunflower) choir, the youth band organized by the Palestinian Women's Union in Cairo. As early as he could remember "my mother would carry me" to rehearsals,

until he could walk the distance himself. Led informally by female and male comrades of the union, the repertoire included nationalist classics and others composed in Egypt. Keeping together a tight-knit group over a period marked by Egyptian normalization with Israel and a rolling back of Palestinian social rights,<sup>11</sup> the ensemble put children at the center of national transmission.<sup>12</sup>

With the first intifada erupting back home, a five-year-old Tamer appeared in a well-produced 1991 video, singing “Ma fi khuf” (There’s no fear). He played the role of older brother, teaching a younger boy of the heroism of the stone-throwing youth in Palestine, and “freedom knocking at the door” of a country taking destiny in its own hands. Lyrics were supplied by Ibrahim Ba’lousha:

Have no fear, God is with them, have no fear  
The stones in their hands have become a Kalashnikov.

With both boys wearing *kuffiehs*, in a simple room made up to feature embroidery, clay pottery, and pro-Palestine posters, footage of Tamer singing is spliced with imagery of al-Aqsa, huge demonstrations, and youths bravely facing Zionist tanks and helicopters. This symbolism formed a key part of choir sociality. Where “Mawtini” had linked the flag to the victory of an honorable cause, the choir were pictured surrounded by flags, with females sporting an array of *tatriz* dresses and males in the black and white *kuffieh*. The *oud* was brought into the fold, with photos showing that, as Tamer grew, he took on the role of a soloist, whether onstage or in the many social gatherings held by the union. In one photo from the mid-1990s, Tamer is pictured playing the *oud* along to a cassette tape, at the head of a table of around twenty children dressed for the occasion, toddlers to teenagers, their mouths open in song. Women’s Union figures were interviewed on local radio and newspapers, after leading musical commemorations of the Nakba, and of resistance figures such as Samih al-Qasim.<sup>13</sup> Tamer’s mother and choir founder, Faiha Abdulhadi, also wrote lyrics to the choir’s anthem “‘Abbad al-Shams”:

Stamp the earth with your feet  
And let the world hear your sound  
Plant your feet at the roots and embrace the sun of your life.

Music recorded during this childhood and teenage period appeared on Tamer's retrospective cassette, *Ganayin el-Ghuna* (Gardens of song), released during the second intifada in 2001. A young *kuffieh*-wearing Tamer appears on the cover, singing proudly, playing an *oud* that looks double his size. "When I look back at the songs now, I associate them with childhood," Tamer remarks. He explained later that, having sung clearly "for the nation and the cause and the beautiful things and the revolution," he began to feel he needed to "vent in another way." By 1998, the family had returned to Nablus, facilitated by post-Oslo agreements, and Tamer enrolled at the newly formed National Conservatory for Music in Ramallah.<sup>14</sup> However, the siege of the city intensified to the point where study was impossible. Returning to Cairo, Tamer was joined for a period by his teacher Khaled Jubran, who left the conservatoire, frustrated both by the siege and by the institution's repetition of European models. Khaled brought together what he said was a small group of "strong and committed students," and Tamer reflects that:

Throughout that process, the idea of experimentation and of breaking the laws of things after learning them was key to what he taught me at that time. This changed the way I saw my space and my music.

Following their earlier band collaborations in 2002–3, which included concerts in Alexandria and Cairo, Tamer and Huda fronted the Jehar project, directed by their mentor from 2004 to 2006, and signaling an absorption of the work of Sabreen, whose vision of collective artistry had allied cosmopolitan musicianship with new poetic movements in 1980s Palestine. Though Khaled Jubran was not a core Sabreen member, their musical and social journeys converged in the grassroots Palestinian music scene in occupied Jerusalem, where he and other musicians gravitated.<sup>15</sup> He was a regular visitor to the Sabreen studio space in Sheikh Jarrah, joined the band as a *buzuq* player on tour, which included Tunisia in 1993, and is cited by founding member Said Murad as one of the period's most important players and researchers.<sup>16</sup> Khaled credits his father with creating the first *buzuq* in Palestine after hearing Lebanese virtuoso Mohammad Matar, and Khaled joined Sabreen band members Odeh Turjman, Jamal Moghrabi, and Kamilya Jubran in fronting a new wave of Palestinian players. Tamer took up the instrument in a focused way under Khaled, spurred on by

sharing *oud* responsibilities with Huda. Like leading Sabreen musicians Kamilya Jubran (vocals, *oud*, *qanun*, *buzuq*) and composer Said Murad (*oud*, *buzuq*, percussion), Tamer and Huda were multi-instrumentalists, with Huda also studying *qanun*.

However, the influence of Khaled and the Sabreen approach were not expressed only through instrumental choices. Seeing potential in Tamer's "crazy" tendencies toward musical progression, and knowing his earlier recordings of protest songs, his mentor reveals that he had told him, "we don't need another Marcel Khalife," and instead promoted a musical philosophy that raised questions through critical engagement. Described affectionately by Emile Ashrawi as a "naughty" (*sha'i*) musician,<sup>17</sup> Khaled would ask why the youngsters wanted to cover known pieces. "There had to be a good reason," for example, to perform Sayyid Darwish songs nearly a century after their composition. While Huda reports that "Shidd al-hizam" (Tighten your belt) and other Darwish works made it into Jehar concert setlists in Cairo and Alexandria, there is a sense that, in the hands of this committed group of young musicians, repetition and experimentation would collide to produce something new.

In one example, Jehar "remixed" the song "Ya Luur,"<sup>18</sup> released by Fairuz in 1957 as "Ya Luur hubbuki." Some sources see the melody as originating in Lebanese folk traditions, but the memoirs of Halim al-Rumi attribute its composition to composer Mitri Effendi al-Murr, a contributor to early twentieth-century Orthodox hymn books.<sup>19</sup> Confusion is compounded by credits shown on Fairuz's record notes, some of which wrongly suggest Sayyid Darwish as the composer.<sup>20</sup> The song featured in the 1975 highlights of Fairuz's musical *Mais al-Rim*, sung by Maurice Akl, with the official release erroneously crediting Elias Rahbani with the melody; the best-known lyrics seem to be rightly attributed to the Rahbani brothers, however. Further showing the song's absorption into folklore, leading Lebanese vocalist Rima Khcheich points out that elderly members of her husband's family sang the song to different lyrics during an earlier period in Beirut.<sup>21</sup>

Whichever origin story we follow, it is clear that the very choice of song references concepts of both repetition and renewal, with meaningful repercussions for contrasting adaptations. The earlier Fairuz version had featured guitar, piano, accordion, and string section, alongside clave patterns, bongos, and rhythms borrowed from Cuban music. There is a clear chordal pattern, based on variations of a minor I-V7 chord progression,

very little decoration of string and vocal lines, and ornaments left to short accordion and acoustic guitar breaks around *maqam nahawand*. *Mais al-rim* stage adaptations were similar and the character Luur listened and swayed as the male chorus sang their affections.

In the Jehar arrangement, developed in Egypt under Khaled's direction and recorded during Tamer and Huda's band performance in Ramallah in 2005, "Ya Luur" discards the harmonic references and leading role of Western instruments in the Fairuz/Rahbani arrangements. The calmness with which silken-outfitted stage performers crooned the melody in *Mais al-rim* vanished, as *buzuq* and *oud* drive forward an angular piece, with unexpected intervallic movements and rhythmic subdivisions of the basic 4/4 time signature (3 + 5 + 4 + 4 in the introduction), creating an unsettled effect. Tamer's *buzuq* and Huda's *oud* initially provide the main rhythmic and melodic tension, with clarinet from Reem Shilleh providing more recognizable reference to the "original" song. The use of dynamics contrasted with the Rahbani/Fairuz versions; instruments drop out for dramatic effect before the fourth line of selected poetic quatrains, and return with vocal crescendos and strummed strings, both components of early Sabreen arrangements.<sup>22</sup>

The *buzuq* carried similarities to Tamer and Khaled's playing on the latter's 2005 album *Mazamir* (Psalms), resembling Khaled's pieces "Isfahan" and "Crucifixion" in creating intense mood and in their use of space. Though Khaled's work was not primarily vocal-driven, the Jehar arrangement includes the often frenzied dynamics of "Mazamir," pointing to a clear contextual break with the singing of Fairuz and Maurice Akl.

Fairuz had sung to the land in a mood of tranquility and quiet nostalgia for its "dreamy days" and slumber. Now, such themes took on startling new meaning in the contexts of violent repression of popular expression in Palestine, or in Egypt-based separation, which carried its own tensions. In September 2004, at a Jehar performance of the piece at the Remix workshop at the Jesuits Cultural Center in Cairo, with Jubran seated alongside the band in supervision, Tamer and Huda ended abruptly with a couplet from the first stanza sung by Fairuz:

Don't you recall our wonderful nights together  
And the pledge we made to be true to each other?

By the time they performed in Ramallah, the arrangement was longer and more rhythmically detailed, and there was raw emotion in the raised voices of the vocalists as the piece gathered steam. The interplay of *buzuq* and *oud* in instrumental passages was more contrapuntal, separating and coming together as the vocals return. The same lines ended the arrangement, yet the preceding couplet, admonishing the loved one for “tormenting my heart” were sung more hoarsely. What appeared shyly in Fairuz’s 1950s Lebanon was voiced with ferocity in 2000s Palestine—now the subject of the lyrics. To Huda, Jehar “sounded like bombs.”

A subtler contrast may be heard in comparing Marcel Khalife’s musical setting of Mahmoud Darwish’s poem “‘An insan” (On man) to that by Said Murad and Sabreen. The final lines of the latter, recorded in Palestine in 1984, arguably carry an urgency missing from Khalife’s interpretation. This is not to suggest a musical determinism, where performance intrinsically reflected events on the ground, but to recenter the two intifadas, their insurrectionary buildups, and aftermaths as important backdrops to the performances of both Sabreen and the Jehar project. Both performed outside Palestine during these periods, with performances in Egypt met with palpable enthusiasm.<sup>23</sup> Jehar’s positively frantic arrangement of “Umm al-Khalil,” credited to Iraqi *oud* player Munir Bashir, was performed in 2004 at El Sawy Culture Wheel in Zamalek, Cairo, leading to long applause and crowd whistling. Iraq and Palestine were both ablaze.

It is significant that the deeper learning process facilitated during their time in Egypt led Tamer and Huda toward revolutionizing their own approaches to musical arrangement, composition, and performance. Continually naming Khaled and Sabreen as impacting their approaches, the musicians lay claim to carrying on the legacy, although their performance aesthetics would evolve in their own ways. Reflecting in 2015, Tamer revealed that he had spent ten years “trying to continue what they did in the 80s.” In his view, the influence was groundbreaking on a regional scale:

I know it is not directly connected but it is true that you hear now attempts of artists in Egypt and Lebanon, then go back to listen to Sabreen recordings from the 80s, and think that that was the start of what is happening now.



Sabreen had found a niche among students in urban centers of 1980s Palestine, and are appreciably better known among those who were teenagers or young adults in Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> Influences on Sabreen had included Palestine-based bands such as Firqat Balaleen and al-Bara'em,<sup>25</sup> along with Marcel Khalife's refined artistry accompanying messages of solidarity and hope. Sabreen utilized space provided by political upheaval in Jerusalem to experiment and learn, and their legacy also inspired socialist and revolutionary activists to sing their songs, including Palestinian political prisoners in Zionist jails.<sup>26</sup>

In a political period, Sabreen had tapped into the popularity of radical poetry and international musical tastes and found themselves in the position of musical vanguard for left-nationalists and, notably, '48 Palestinians attracted to the scene in Jerusalem. The performance spaces found in Egypt by Tamer and Huda during, before, and after Jehar were also left-field, "underground," and activist. Noting that "the alternative music presence was very limited at that time," a theme picked up below, Huda cites Hassan el-Geretly and Egypt's free theater movement and new bands like Wust El-Balad as helping to "boost" the young Palestinians' presence.<sup>27</sup>

In the role of music director and mentor for the Jehar project, Khaled also came to work in comparable roles with other Palestinian musicians, including as "a kind of artistic supervisor" for oud player Nizar Rohana's 2005 album *Sard* (Narration), which featured Khaled's poetry and musical input.<sup>28</sup> He would also mentor other young musicians, including vocalist and flute player Nai Barghouti, performing alongside her in Ramallah in 2011. Tracing his involvement in the formative musicianship of Tamer in particular, both as an instrumentalist and active voice in pressing for "alternative" forms and spaces, Khaled provided a link to a radical history of Palestinian band musicianship, influencing future directions, and taking critical aesthetic visions into new locations.

### **Crisis, Culture, and the "Pyramids" of Egyptian Music**

Tamer, Huda, Khaled, and a handful of other Palestinians journeyed to Egypt by different routes at a time of exploding popular anger at an intensifying violent colonialism at home in Palestine. The same period in Cairo saw steadily building discontent at economic decline, neoliberalism,

normalization with Zionism, and a simmering crisis of cultural expression under the Mubarak government. As I have suggested so far, the Jehar project built connections to an expansive vision of Palestinian artistry rooted in radical grassroots invention at times of intense struggle. Egypt, as a place of learning and performing for Tamer, and as a historic nucleus of regional anticolonial culture, was heading into its own existential showdown.

Analyzing the context of the 2011 Tahrir Square movement, Shenker traces Egypt's decline as a regional force to its 1967 defeat, which led to a realignment with U.S. imperialism under Anwar Sadat that amounted, more or less, to dependency.<sup>29</sup> In parallel, "As Sadat's economic reforms and their attendant culture of crude materialism chipped away at loftier intellectual values, Egypt's reputation as a cultural nerve centre also began to wane."<sup>30</sup> This crisis of cultural production for the nation that had held sway over Arab radio waves and film since their inception in the first half of the twentieth century had, by its nadir, reached a point where the relative rise of Gulf states presented serious rivalries to the position that Cairo had enjoyed.<sup>31</sup> While some have put Egypt's purported musical decline down to an absence of charismatic powerhouses in the molds of Umm Kulthum, Abdel Halim Hafez, or Gamal Abdel Nasser,<sup>32</sup> the road to the late Mubarak era was made possible by a shift in Egyptian capitalist ideology, away from the "socialism" of Nasserist state ownership toward widespread privatization. Egypt's position within a U.S. sphere of influence from the mid-1970s, impacted by regional oil crises, fueled ruling-class views that state-sponsored arts lacked dynamism, alongside Western encouragement for moves away from nationally based forms.<sup>33</sup>

Describing a "rollercoaster" of neoliberalism, Winegar argues that "the key tension in Egyptian concepts of artistic authenticity lay elsewhere."<sup>34</sup> In an Egypt "rife with anxiety," the time-worn dichotomies of *mu'asara* (modernity) and *asala* (authenticity), the latter often seen as "resisting the West," had, by the late 1990s, reached a point of derision, with questioning, and intense criticism among artists over the cultural soul of an Egyptian society.<sup>35</sup> Less concerned with reconciling the authentic individual with society, artistic discussion now focused on defining the notion of Egyptian society itself, its relationships to the world, and the role of cultural producers within it.<sup>36</sup> Unresolved in the post-2011 period, Amro Ali finds an "epidemic of unhappiness in Egypt,"<sup>37</sup> while Shielke and Shehata

observe “liberal-bourgeois intellectual” circles following trends for “alternative” lifestyles seen as more authentic.<sup>38</sup> Writing on Abdel Halim, Stokes argues that “in the Egyptian context, as elsewhere, modernity is the location of particularly complex and unsettled struggles,” tending toward asking “whose modernity it is, in the eyes of which beholder it resides, and what interests it serves.”<sup>39</sup> A clear implication for this chapter is that such questions were as pressing in the late Mubarak era as they are now.

Philosophizing on the position of Palestinian musicianship toward Arab musical arts, Khaled Jubran evokes the gravitational pull of the “pyramids” of mid-twentieth-century Egyptian music: “Qasabgi, Sunbati, Umm Kulthum, Abdel Wahab, *salam ‘alaykum!*”<sup>40</sup> Related to arguments on the collective interruption imposed on Palestinian society by the Nakba and mass ethnic cleansing,<sup>41</sup> the lens of analysis is turned back on Egypt. Hinting that their reproduction or repetition—a theme analyzed in more detail in the next section—was neither possible nor desirable for the Palestinians, Khaled views Egyptian musicianship over this period as straitjacketed to “the pyramids,” tying these observations to problems of conservatoire reproduction across the Arab world, including in Palestine, where he had recently left the National Conservatory. Tamer and Huda came with him into a new workshoping project, which sought to expose participants to advanced techniques and new forms:

A very well-known and respected *qanun* master from Cairo came to work with us for two days. My idea was for him to present the instrument to other musicians; it didn’t matter if they played *qanun* or not. He didn’t understand what the fuck I was talking about: “I teach *qanun*, so you must bring me *qanun* students.” He didn’t understand what a workshop is. This is what the conservatoire does to you, and, more specifically, what the conservatoire in Egypt does to you.

I brought a master Iranian *tar* player.<sup>42</sup> She understood straight away, even though this would be the first time the students had even seen a *tar*. I failed completely with the *qanun* player and other Egyptians. The Iranians, Indians, Afghans, and other Palestinians who came got it. The classic Egyptian method didn’t get it. . . . I failed to convince them to get out of that square around specific instrumental approaches.

Khaled adds that one of the Egyptians was a younger generation jazz guitarist, but “I couldn’t break through,” tracing the issue to modern pedagogic models in general. Criticizing a “third world mentality,” Khaled reports that the Palestinian conservatoire “copied directly, note for note” the Egyptian model of teaching Abdel Wahab pieces and of directly “translating” the British Trinity College syllabus of Western music in the search for “methods.” Via the United Nations Development Program, the conservatoire would graft “random instruments” onto the Palestinian setting—“who needs a French horn?!”—and “dress the kids in a *kuffieh* and *thob mitarraz* [embroidered dress]” for performances of *musiqā mutarjama* (translated music).<sup>43</sup> Presenting an alternative, Khaled “wanted to teach Palestinians who feel what they play,” rather than rely on Europeanized “methods.”

While waves of Egyptian modernization have been traced variously to the standardizing urges of the 1932 Cairo Congress, to “statist” Nasserism, “antistatist” post-Nasserism, or to Sisi-era gentrification, the contemporary model of conservatoire music finds roots in nineteenth-century relationships between the British Empire and the Egyptian elite.<sup>44</sup> European military bands, theory, notation, and elements of music education appeared under the nineteenth-century rule of Muhammad Ali, with concert halls built to house visiting European classical ensembles. Private patronage remained the dominant form of organization over the pre-Nasser period,<sup>45</sup> while reformers “developed a brand of musical chauvinism,” where “Arab music’s shortcomings were explained in contrast to Western music’s strengths.”<sup>46</sup> Though many recommendations of the Cairo Congress failed in practice, it succeeded in instigating a national music education curriculum across Egypt, seeing Western techniques of instruction as a modern exemplar, even if Arab music was the goal. Under Nasser, although the government espoused “a sort of ‘universalism,’” writes Sprengel, “it upheld the secular-educated, upwardly mobile middle-class citizen as a national ideal.”<sup>47</sup> The Cairo conservatoire, founded in 1959, is now funded by the European Union and primarily teaches European classical music.

Viewing conservatoire models as stultifying indigenous models of music learning, Khaled’s standpoint found willing pupils in a younger generation, with Tamer coming to agree that music is “something you feel, rather

than just think.” Reflecting on the crisis he saw in Egypt, with an inability to break out of the “square” of modern instruction in the early 2000s, Khaled saw Palestinian musicians as having the capacity to do just that:

We needed something new in Egypt to break the connection to the pyramids. Palestinians were capable of this before 2011, Egyptians after—they began to write poetry and online posts about “breaking the pyramids”—it was about time, but risky.

Underpinning this narrative and allied, I suggest, to Huda’s view on the limited space for alternative visions of performance in Egypt during this period, is the conviction that experimentation was required to smash the molds of modernizing processes. In interviews, Tamer and Huda would speak in particular about the DIY scenes in Beirut with which they would find common purpose, but I see important differences, illustrative of the aesthetics and wider contexts of Palestinian musical intervention in Egypt. As Burkhalter shows, for example, few of the “avant-garde” musicians in early 2000s Beirut worked with Arab instruments, quarter-tones, or were trained in *maqam* music, working for the most part with Western instruments.<sup>48</sup> Certain scene-centered Palestinian acts, too, presented work developed from their hearing of U.S. rap, reggae, or transatlantic pop,<sup>49</sup> reiterating that style, technique, and uses of space are bound up in “negotiating processes of modernization.”<sup>50</sup> Unlike these examples, Khaled’s direction of Jehar had grown out of a process of conservatoire education that he and the group participated in and challenged, while they energetically reinterpreted instrumental *maqam* traditions. Breaking the pyramids, in summary, had many sociomusical connotations.

Revealed in Khaled’s workshop reports are attempts to expose participants to sounds of the global south, with Iranian, Indian, Moroccan, and other musicians brought in to present musical principles to the group—contributing to a “vast playground” of genres, according to Tamer. Rather than directly repeating or adopting such sounds, reimagining musical transmission meant “experimentation,” a concept utilized by all of the interviewees and by musicians and scholars in broader literatures on music making;<sup>51</sup> Jehar was, admittedly, a “musical experiment,” encompassing folk and classical Arab repertoires relatable to the intifada era.<sup>52</sup> In their evocation of both this concept and the traditional instrumental

basis of their interventions in Egypt and Palestine, the Jehar musicians embroidered another thread in their tapestry to Sabreen. According to founder Said Murad, the Sabreen agenda was

to create a new character, a new identity for the Arabs. For me this is the modern Arab I see for the future. . . . This diversity actually started from the '70s, putting different types of music together to the point where we now have hundreds of different types of experiments. This is part of building a new music that expresses a new, let's say, Arab world.

Taken together with the musical commitments voiced by Khaled, Tamer, and Huda, the acts of liberation present in general form in alternative scenes in Beirut, Cairo, and other Arab centers take on concrete form in Palestine. For Murad, "talk[ing] about your area and your struggle . . . in an international language" did not leave behind traditional instrumental techniques, nor political references. Nor did it mean seeing this language as "universal." Speaking on tendencies to standardize *maqam* intonation, for example, Khaled remarks:

It's like bringing an electric keyboard, the *org*, for example, and playing the note *si* (B) and we all follow it—what the fuck? Why aim for unity when diversity is the most beautiful thing? This is not going to bring us any wars or armies!

Such music philosophies are clearly worded to challenge tendencies in the contemporary mainstream of Arab music education, seeing standardization as threatening the diverse tendencies of a wave of critical music emerging among Palestinians after 1967. Whether or not we take with a pinch of salt the suggestion that pre-2011 Egyptian musicians were stuck in a square, or indeed tied to the pyramids, the experimentation of the Sabreen generation called on recent revolutions in music, developed in times of intense Palestinian resistance, embodying critique of form, content, and space. For Tamer, it became pressing to ask "where you choose to place yourself in the political and economic and social contexts after you have created the music." It is conceivable that, in the contemporary whirlwinds of national struggle, Palestinians were well placed to address such questions before Egyptians.

Related to the issues discussed in this section, I argue that the group's observations on aesthetic production should be situated alongside a recognition of the legacies of repression and resistance in Egypt, political and cultural, of which the Palestinian issue has formed an important organizing principle. As Reem Abou-El Fadl shows, Palestine came to be a "major fault line" in the 2011 protests; there was mass anger at the pro-Israel policies of Egypt's rulers since the mid-1970s, which had been expressed most brazenly in collaboration with the Israeli blockade of Gaza.<sup>53</sup> In the context of reorientation toward the United States, Egypt's own Palestinian community had become suspect "as security threats and deprived of the considerable educational, employment, and political opportunities and rights they had enjoyed under Nasser."<sup>54</sup> The central squares that filled in 2011—and that had earlier brimmed during the funerals of Umm Kulthum and Abdel Halim—also witnessed mass demonstrations in solidarity with the intifadas.<sup>55</sup> Anti-Zionist boycott movements attracted many, despite official policy, with demonstrations frequently coming to target Egyptian collusion from the early 2000s.<sup>56</sup> It is testimony to such movements' grassroots power that associations such as the 'Abbad al-Shams choir were able to organize successfully among Palestinian exiles and their supporters, with music at the center of transmitting the national cause.

Contemporaneous with confrontations over Palestine, DIY music phenomena were developing on their own steam, falling afoul of official policy, meeting ruling class aversion to and repression of newer working-class genres such as *mahraganat*. More recent media attacks against supposed indecency found roots in the state-backed Musicians' Union, which played the role of enforcer during the Mubarak years and after.<sup>57</sup> A wider view sees privatization and the cultivation of right-wing Islam under Sadat, and the repression of leftists over a longer period of cultural and political discontent, as important contexts to recent developments.<sup>58</sup>

Such backdrops are revealing when placed alongside comments by Huda and Tamer on the low ebb of alternative music in Egypt during the period of Jehar. While undoubtedly true in comparison to the expanded reach of a variety of styles after 2011, the narrative is taken to an extreme through a brand of music journalism or scene-loyal curation that sees "no scene" to speak about in Egypt and the wider Arab region before the Tahrir Square era.<sup>59</sup> There remain important and unresolved questions

surrounding what constitutes “alternative.”<sup>60</sup> Like the visiting Western art experts seen by Winegar in Cairo in an earlier period, the formalist phraseology presenting “alternative bands” from Palestine and the region often rejects the overtly political, national, and traditional, and embraces more overtly Westernized and cosmopolitan music as alternative.

Rather than seeing the emergence of Arab alternative music as a genre-based trend which gathered popularity in the wake of 2011, it is my contention that the alternative, anticolonialist, and critical music practices of Sabreen—and their embrace by committed figures in a new generation of Palestinian music makers—prompt a rethink of this narrative. It could also be argued that this radicalism found parallels in the resistance singing of Sheikh Imam, whose work critiqued imperialism and Egyptian politics from the 1960s. “Breaking the pyramids” may already have happened at the level of the masses, as shown in the enduring influence of family friend and comrade Sheikh Imam on Hazem Shaheen and other groundbreaking Egyptian musicians.<sup>61</sup> In tying themselves to radical traditions in a time of deepening crisis, Tamer, Huda, Hazem, and other young musicians saw relevance in the past, but sought new means to express the experiences of the second intifada generation. Embodying the dialectic notions of invention and tradition, Jehar presented variations on the repressed melody of revolution.

### **Repetition, Music, and Crisis: Reshaping Palestinian Aesthetics in Egypt**

Give me a sign that says  
 That longing ends  
 That the traveler will return  
 To tend the young palm trees  
 To call on a dawn  
 Gain a lifetime  
 And paint suns like no other suns  
 Make seasons like no other seasons.  
 –RAMEZ FARAG, “ALAMEH”

Tamer and other musicians were grassroots participants in the movement in 2011. In the same city in which he had sung for the Palestinian homeland as a child, Tamer led mass performances, singing “Egyptian revolution



everywhere.” The period since Tamer’s return to Cairo in 2002 has involved scenes of dramatic political succession in Egypt, where, via popular revolt and overturned elections, one military strongman has been replaced with another. Following his famous remarks on history repeating as tragedy and farce, Marx’s bold analysis of 1848 and the French coup of Louis Bonaparte saw “not only a caricature of the old Napoleon, but the old Napoleon himself” appearing in nineteenth-century form.<sup>62</sup> Napoleon had already appeared in the Middle East, of course.<sup>63</sup> His specter, and the remarks of Marx on historic recurrence, haunt Egyptian society menacingly.

This is not the place for a thoroughgoing analysis of Egypt’s counter-revolutionary period after the coup of July 2013, yet by tying this investigation to a historical materialist critique, the theme of repetition enables a deeper understanding of how Palestinian musicianship is shaped in exile. Viewing the concepts of continuation, restatement, remembering, and renewing as intrinsically linked in fields of political culture, the function of repetition is explored here as it relates to Palestine and regional music traditions. Inspired by an era of nationally based musical invention, and in the longer scope of tendencies toward preserving Palestinian narratives, themes present in Tamer’s work are examined in their relationships to crisis, grassroots renewal, and revolutionary heritage.

Borrowing vocabulary from Western classical music, Said is noted for his development of “counterpoint” as a frame of reference for analyzing culture and imperialism;<sup>64</sup> the term also denotes his own “out of place” experiences as a Palestinian exile in the United States.<sup>65</sup> The concept of repetition forms its own index in Said’s written output, theorized in literary criticism, and drawn on in discussions of cultural and political phenomena. Beginning here from the concrete conditions of displacement, his remarks on preventing the Palestinian people from being overlooked meant that narratives of the past, and particularly on the Nakba, were crucial weapons for combating the colonialist narratives of the present. Repetition on the part of the Palestinians countered Zionism claims of legitimacy in a mythical past. Its realities resembled earlier European colonialism: “The colonization of Palestine proceeded always as a fact of repetition.”<sup>66</sup>

Oral narratives of expulsion and the daily struggles of refugee existence become “refrains,” shaping collective memory,<sup>67</sup> and “articulating and

crystallizing a shared affective and corporeal experience.”<sup>68</sup> To this reflection, Jayyusi draws out the “sense of betrayal” as a key discursive subject. I see this implicit criticism crystallized in the field of organized politics. At a time of crisis, Palestinian Marxist George Habash called for the “repetition of the Lebanese model on Palestinian soil” following the “inspirational” renewal of anti-Zionist resistance alongside local Arab forces.<sup>69</sup> Habash also emphasized social and class divisions within the national liberation movement, and predicted ruin for a policy of “deviation” into “sacrificing our principles.” Repetition of unity in action is here contrasted with a threat to this unity by PLO leaders.

In diverse fields of literature and poetry before and since the Nakba, repetition is a technical and thematic device, and constitutes a binding feature of Palestinian musics. Traditional musicopoetic frameworks such as *dal'una* or *'ataba* revolve around repeated melodic fragments and rhyming structures; musicians leaving behind traditional forms continue to employ repetition, for example, through melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic ideas, or in the retention of instrumental timbres or techniques. Oral traditions in folk stories employ devices to both avoid repetition or render it necessary,<sup>70</sup> while, for resistance writers such as Kanafani, reiterating significant passages ensures “the reader’s involvement . . . as a moment for a pause for the reader to rethink what s/he has just read.”<sup>71</sup> Or, thinking back to chapter 1, repetition can be used to emphasize the betrayal represented in a country like Kuwait.<sup>72</sup> During fieldwork in Nabi Saleh village for her work “Repetition = Resistance,” visual artist Saumya Deva utilized images of *kuffieh* scarves, on seeing repetition in the narratives of Manal al-Tamimi and other women in the village, who “ensured that the Palestinian youth of her community sustained pride in their identities as they resisted the overwhelming plight of the occupation.”<sup>73</sup> A similar spirit can be seen in photos of the ‘Abbad al-Shams choir of Tamer’s youth.

In the regional traditions of *maqam* culture, of which Cairo was a twentieth-century focal point, collective experiences of musical spontaneity saw repeated phrases as a mark both of the affected state of the audience and of the abilities of performers to display a variety of ornamentations or modulations.<sup>74</sup> Umm Kulthum, it is often said, “never sang a line the same way twice,”<sup>75</sup> but she frequently repeated meaningful stanzas, single lines, or whole sections, elongating shorter pieces into hour-plus performances at the behest of the crowd. In *maqam* pedagogy

and performance, repetition is an organizational principle. Sami Abu Shumays explains that “Tarab often results from ecstatic repetition . . . that repetition deepens and ingrains something into memory further.”<sup>76</sup> There are shards of significance here for arguments on Palestinian narrative transmission, with relevance to the commitment of grassroots musicianship present in other chapters in this book. Collective experience and refrains of Palestine, encompassing stories, histories, and musical forms, are referential to situations on the ground and to communally produced encores of social meaning.

As a literary strategy, Said saw repetition as a measure of a text’s worldliness—or its position “in the world, as opposed to some extra-worldly, private, ethereal context.”<sup>77</sup> In Said’s reading of Vico, history, “as the form of human existence,” becomes an expression of vacillating interests in “the unchanging, the universal, the constant, the repeatable, on the one hand, and on the other an interest in the original, the revolutionary, the unique and contingent.”<sup>78</sup> Focusing on the novel, whose meaning itself is “original,” or a “challenge to repetition,” Said ultimately views repetition as “an optic employed (or employable) to discuss the continuity, the perpetuity, and the recurrence of human history.”<sup>79</sup> Citing Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire* as a “paradigm of intellectual literature,” whose “method is to repeat in order to produce difference,” Said identifies the critical consciousness enabled by “a methodological revolution” illustrating human power to transform nature.<sup>80</sup>

Subverting Vico’s view that “knowing and making are one,” Marx concludes that the conditions in which humans make history are “not as they please,” but rather “transmitted from the past.”

The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language.<sup>81</sup>

As Finnegan reminds us, the poetic or artistic means employed in political or social acts are “not the passive repetition of externally

determined words,” but “people actively molding the world around them.”<sup>82</sup> Whether or not they do this “preeminently” through poetry, as she concludes, Finnegan’s words are suggestive of the way in which cultural actors engage in historic processes, or make aesthetic and narrative choices to “present the new scene.”

In centers of periodic rupture of differing kinds, and in processes shaped by the repressive and productive contradictions of colonialism, musicians in Egypt and Palestine present a range of cultural phenomena expressive of the dialectic of repetition and renewal. In the hands of revolutionary composer Sayyid Darwish, writes Muhssin, monologues became “songs of a narrational nature. . . . They were forward-moving and had no refrains or musical repetition.”<sup>83</sup> Yet, many of his noted innovations, including the invention of new *maqamat*, or of writing for untrained, working-class singers, came off the back of successful composing in accepted forms such as *muwashshah*. Palestinian innovators, including the Sabreen group, experimented with “borrowed” world sounds and composed to poetry without choruses or accepted rhyming structures. At the same time, the group embraced oral methods and often took on the tasks of training younger musicians themselves—*oud* player Wissam Murad, for example, remembers Kamilya Jubran as his first teacher of *maqam*, and joined the youth band Bidayat (Beginnings) set up by the Sabreen group during the intifada years.<sup>84</sup> In insurrectionary periods, Palestine’s musical revolutionaries were careful to shake up rather than to sidestep *maqam* traditions.

Huyssen has argued that repetition offers routes to modernist innovation in indigenous, rather than “Western avant-gardist” terms.<sup>85</sup> Tamer has tapped into such principles, combining technical rigor with *oud/buzuq* and composition with continued exploration in his performing career since Jehar; it is also revealing that, while he plays the role of advocate for alternative musicians that often have little to do with *maqam* tradition, in interviews he nevertheless identifies Simon Shaheen and Ziad Rahbani—both virtuoso musicians active since the 1970s—as among the region’s most important musical figures. Tamer sees Rahbani’s work as his “closest reference,” highlighting an influence apparent in his work.<sup>86</sup> Unlike Shaheen, Tamer does not record material from the *turath* of Arab instrumentalism but, as shown in his live performance alongside Reem Kelani, he sustains an imaginative and proficient approach to *taqasim* improvisation.<sup>87</sup> Transmitted from a regional, pre-Nakba past, traditions of satire

and a *maqam*-based challenging of instrumental boundaries form part of a musical worldliness, to borrow Said's terminology.

Although the idea of extending *maqam* systems also implies their continuance, both Tamer and Khaled would move on from models promoted by their parents. While Tamer describes his journey into adult musicianship as a growing out of "beautiful" revolutionary singing, the Jubran household was rocked by arguments over contesting visions of *oud* playing:

My father was very conservative, very traditional and he'd listen only to very specific *oud* players from Egypt or Syria. There was an old player, Omar Naqshabandi, . . . that was my father exactly. When I heard Naqshabandi, I understood my father. . . . And Riyad Sunbati—if he'd figured out how to play a Sunbati *taqasim* from A to Z, he'd be very satisfied. He'd say, "you can do it!" But I'd say "I don't want to do it," and he'd get upset a little. I remember one Eid night, I argued that all Sunbati melodies are similar and he banged his fist on the table: "No!" He'd get really emotional about this! [laughs].

Khaled developed a style that was "anti-Naqshabandi . . . anti- the style of my father," even though he loved those players, and saw Qasabgi as "exciting." He had become convinced that the *oud* had only "said 10 percent of what it must say," and while he didn't believe in "superimposing the world onto the instrument," through flamenco, Bach, or "dialogues" with other cultures, he saw the *oud* as having vast possibilities; he had also moved on from the *buzuq*, seeing it as "noisy" as he got older. Khaled's questioning of "the pyramids," or "translated" conservatoire methods extended fiery debates closer to home.

At the same time that new aesthetic ground was sought, the modes of expression adopted by Tamer also made space for repetition and reshaping of past themes in poetic language. In the anthem of the 'Abbad al-Shams choir, fruits native to Palestine are depicted alongside the sunflower, all remaining true to their roots while reaching for the sun. Also written in Egypt, Tamer's repeatedly performed song "Takhobot" is built around the sun as a central figure; the sun also appears in the poetry of Ramez Farag in "Fajrolbeed" (where the sun "puts on her pearls and starts to hum") and "'Alameh," both set to music on the same album. As pervasive

a motif as stones, olives, and oranges in the imagery of Palestinian literature, the sun (*al-shams*) referred at one point to those living “under the sun” (*taht al-shams*), or in “self-confident” exile outside of Palestine, compared to those left “under the occupation.”<sup>88</sup> *Al-shams* appears in Kanafani as a critique of Gulf capitalism, bleakly painting the fate of refugee journeys through the desert,<sup>89</sup> in the Rahbani brothers as a marker of the lengthening days of exile,<sup>90</sup> and in numerous musical examples, including the opening, workaday verse to Sabreen’s Patriotic Song,<sup>91</sup> and al-Bara’em welcoming the light of the sun, while rejecting “traditions past” and the “opium” of old habits.<sup>92</sup> Given the varying, and markedly antinostalgic, breadth of many of these references, Tamer’s lyrical intervention does not seem out of place, climaxing in the hoarsely sung:

The rain rose, drank a drop, the cloud still rolling  
and I was burned by the sun.

The “Takhabbut” sun had appeared earlier as forgetful and incompetent, but remained capable of incendiary damage to those who witnesses. As in Farag and Faiha Abdulhadi, the sun takes on human characteristics, yet appears closest in its violent tendencies to the voyage of displacement delineated by Kanafani, and furthest from his mother’s picture of nourishing the land and its guardians. Themes of lyrical repetition in Tamer’s post-2011 songwriting walk paths of strategic closeness to—and the harshness of distance from—earlier poetic discourse.

In Vico, the family is seen as a metaphor of “poetic” human repetition, where filial engenderment is generalized to describe the activity of humanity remaking itself. Through this process, writes Said, it “is natural to see the passing of time as *repeating* the very reproductive, and repetitive, course by which man engenders and reengenders himself or his offspring.”<sup>93</sup> Narratives of Palestinian struggle are transmitted in closely built communities, where the family forms a unit of survival and steadfastness. Yet examples of affiliation (the conscious opposite of filiation, which implies being descended from something) abound in the Palestinian case; these range from offspring abandoning career paths encouraged by their parents to switching political parties, or abandoning the cause altogether. While I have identified themes of repetition in the radical musicianship of Tamer and Khaled, the narrative moves on from the

familial “poetic.” If, to paraphrase Marx, the traditions of generations past weigh heavy on social actors in the present, the experiences here suggest tendencies of challenge to living generations in their close communities, accelerated in times of crisis. In rethinking familial modes of expression, both Khaled and Tamer positioned themselves in differing ways toward the radical arts scenes accompanying Palestinian and Egyptian revolutions.

### Some Conclusions on Music and Movement

Before the revolution, listeners to our type of music were in the thousands in Egypt. After, we began to reach people in cities and towns across the country. . . . Now it is huge, but still is not as alternative to commercial music as it should be. . . . I think it will eventually make a bigger difference, not just in Palestine, to how genuine music will become in a general sense, because it is about what you live in real life.

–TAMER

As a child in the choir, Tamer saw the world through the first-hand experiences of communal *sumud*, with the Women’s Union playing a particular role in keeping together a wider community of Palestinian refugees. In a sense, the sociality of involvement acted as a protective bubble, continuing a tradition of transmitting Palestine to the young, as Egyptian crises deepened. At the same time, an “emotive sense of shared identity and fraternity in the struggle against a common threat”<sup>94</sup> meant that the Palestinians were not isolated from the work of Egyptian activists, but became a fundamental part of it. Exilic experience for some, in other words, meant involvement in cultural and political scenes creating collective alternatives to the status quo.

Finding a place for musical expression in Egypt has perhaps preoccupied Tamer more than other Palestinian musicians appearing in this chapter; he would spend much more of his life in Egypt than in Palestine and, after returning from Ramallah in 2002, has more or less remained in Cairo. “What movement is my music a part of?” he asked himself before launching the independent Ekaa label in 2007. Though he found answers in

building links to alternative scenes regionally, and via the 2011 rebellion, Tamer would reiterate his “search for something new” four years later, referencing his formative experience with Jehar over a decade after the project and suggesting that the pursuit of new musical forms took place alongside a search for popular movements with which to connect.

The concept of movement has multiple meanings, of course, invoking artistic trends, waves of street, political, or social activity, or simply as something moving; in Arabic, the *haraka* may similarly refer to phenomena in motion, or concrete notions such as *harakat qawmiya* (resistance movement) or *harakat al-muqawama al-islamiya* (Hamas). The aesthetic concepts discussed in this chapter index Palestinian artists’ dissatisfaction with forms of repetition they saw as static, unmoving, yet are themselves enveloped in attempts at revolutionizing continuity. I have argued that the musicians’ paths convey relationships to dialectical processes in Palestine and Egypt, strongly influenced by a Sabreen generational outlook on musicality shaped by an insurrectionary context in post-1967 Palestine and in an environment where there was no mass movement yet to speak of in Egypt. Tamer and Huda Asfour became leading alternative musicians in this environment, reaching back to a heritage of Palestinian radicalism through the mediation of their mentor.

The arrest of DJ Sama’ by Palestinian Authority police following a December 27, 2020, concert in Jericho threw into relief the kind of alliances hinted at in the search for a new movement. Tamer, her cousin, immediately became a leading voice in the campaign for her release, which came eight days later, and his actions were suggestive of the meaning of his words. Both artists can be said to be part of the alternative Palestinian music scene and have appeared at the same festival billings,<sup>95</sup> yet their aesthetic and narrative approaches differ drastically; as a techno DJ, Sama’ is probably as far away from instrumental *maqam* tradition as one could imagine. The campaign, and the fact that both had been mentored in different ways by Khaled and Kamilya Jubran, points to the heightened importance of social solidarities and quests for new spaces of performing, rather than genre-based definitions, as defining factors in their grouping together as “alternative.” As Jaime Jones observes, the strong overlap of values and music praxis are defining features of underground scenes.<sup>96</sup> In taking a stand against the PA crackdown on spaces used by the masses,



Tamer briefly found “a movement to be a part of” that did not rely on unity of aesthetic approach.<sup>97</sup>

Questions on the direction of Palestine and music had been asked by others too, not least the Sabreen band, whose 2000 album had used the words of Egyptian poet Sayed Hegab to pose the question “*‘Ala fein?’*”—where to? The impasse that gave rise to such questioning, to the Jehar group’s quest to be “relatable to young Palestinians emerging from the siege of the second intifada”<sup>98</sup> and to the intifada itself, meant that there were movements for alternatives in Palestine and Egypt. As part of a younger generation of exiles, Tamer was exposed to the philosophies of earlier figures who responded to the impasse by raising questions of the Arab world’s relationship to imperialism. “Translated music,” for Khaled Jubran, expressed a “Third World state of mind,” where “bullshit” orchestras and Western “methods” were seen by their proponents as heralding Palestinian entry into respectable modernity. Such routes could not, therefore, be wielded as indigenous means of expression. Asked what was missing from the Egyptian and regional music scene in 2014, Tamer responded that “music critique” had eluded musicians, as well as “journalists, authors, and even individual bloggers.”<sup>99</sup> Rather than cheerleading and creating media hype, in other words, building a scene or movement should embody Said’s maxim that “criticism is intellectual life.”<sup>100</sup> Both Khaled and Tamer took on the challenge that this critique entailed.

In discussions of Egypt, despite its noted economic decline and seemingly accelerating cultural irrelevance before 2011, the idea of capitalism in crisis is a low-key guest. Shenker points out that descriptions of “crony capitalism” in the Mubarak era did not fully explain Egypt’s entanglement in global financial turmoil.<sup>101</sup> Economic crisis would mean political meltdown and, as one anonymous writer reports, “a dramatic impact on the local cultural and artistic scenes, resulting in wider aggression against civil society at large.”<sup>102</sup> Involved in the same alternative scene as Tamer, the musician found “vast space for musical experimentation” created in 2011–13, following which even nonpolitical artists were caught in state repression, torture, and imprisonment.<sup>103</sup>

The convulsions of the two decades since Tamer’s return to Cairo show that the gains of grassroots actors cannot be taken for granted. Yet, rather than seeing ruling class responses to this crisis as totalizingly keeping a lid on popular expression, the experiences of the musicians here

show that Palestinian and other grassroots musicians have asserted their rights to space at key moments during state crackdowns and closing official relations with the Zionist state. Resisting from a position of exile under conditions largely unfavorable to Palestinian refugees, the repetition-revolution dichotomy has meant, for example, championing the right to determine how traditional instruments are wielded—a theme developed in the next chapter’s discussion of internal exile. Tamer has become synonymous with an Egyptian alternative music scene that he has helped to cultivate. The movements to come may find a heritage in the poetic refrains of rebuilding anew.

## CHAPTER 5

# "An Even Tougher Act of Resistance": Instrumentalism in the *Dakhil*

### Saied Silbak and the Music of Internal Displacement

On the banks of the Na'amin river, where the *halfa'* grasses shook gently in the easterly breeze from the Mediterranean coast around Akka, lay the northern Palestinian village of Damun.<sup>1</sup> Its inhabitants lived off the land, growing grains, melons, *sabir*, and olives, and setting goats and cattle to graze on surrounding pastures. A majority Muslim population coexisted with a small minority of Christians, mixing socially and for the purpose of agricultural production. There were no cars but, by the 1940s, vans transported produce to the markets in Akka and Haifa, with others using donkeys and bicycles; these were the routes to the nearest doctor or hospital. On the eve of the Nakba, Damun's 1,520 inhabitants saw no Zionist settlements for miles around, though the British occupiers had used village land as an airbase. In July 1948, the Jewish extremist Shiva organization imposed orders for total evacuation as part of Operation Dekel (palm tree), claiming that twenty-five villagers were "suspects"; massacres at Husayniya and Ayn Zaytun expedited this ethnic cleansing process. Israel would later blow the village to smithereens to prevent the return of the villagers.

The Palestinians of Damun mainly fled to Kabul, Tamra, Abelin, and other nearby villages and towns, though some were scattered as far as Egypt. Stephan Khoury, grandfather of Saied Silbak, landed in Shefa'amr, 10 km away. He would spend the rest of his life in this Palestinian city, claimed as part of the Israeli state, one of around 350,000 internally displaced in 1948,<sup>2</sup> and one of 12,617 refugees registered as coming from the village by 2008.<sup>3</sup> Growing up in Shefa'amr in the 1990s, and becoming interested in oral history during teenage years of musical and political

exploration, Saied came to reject Israeli citizenship and to see this village history as pivotal to understanding his own sense of direction. He committed himself to documenting his grandparents' stories before they passed away:

Of course, the village was destroyed in 1948 and the only things left nowadays are stones and graves, as well as one building where they used to bring the animals to drink. . . . When my grandfather was about fourteen, the men of the village had to leave in order to go to Shefa'amr to fight the Zionists who came to evacuate it. My grandfather was left alone with the sheep in the woods for five days while the men were fighting in another city. At the end, the Zionists won, of course—they had more weapons and more support, so my grandparents had to leave their village and go to the nearest city, in this case Shefa'amr. What I got from them is that Muslims and Christians were living alongside each other peacefully and harmoniously in Damun. The religious division in its critical intensity started after Israel was born.

Marches of Return have taken root among committed Palestinians in the *dakhil*. Established as an annual event during renewals of nationalist remembrance, Saied describes attending summer commemorations in the ruins at Damun, a meeting of families from the village and their supporters, converging on the land and sharing stories, poetry, *manaqish*,<sup>4</sup> and music. Standing together in the realization that “we share the same fate and the same reality,” youths sang resistance songs by Sheikh Imam, while elderly women argued over whose stuffed olives and pickled gherkins were the best, or which was the “correct” recipe for *mujaddara*. Ironically, “you end up eating other people’s food and not even getting to try your own.”

Saied sees his urge to retell the story as a “resistance act,” like his *oud* playing, representing a revolutionary standpoint in the face of the overwhelming conquest witnessed by his grandparents. In 2016, at his temporary home in London, where he studied music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Saied wore commitments to land, anticolonial struggle, and musical innovation on his sleeve: present in his room were the two Nasrallahs—books in Arabic by Palestinian novelist Ibrahim, and a photo of Lebanese Hizbullah leader Sayyid Hassan—olives from “back home in Palestine. . . . I’ll kill you if you call me an Israeli Arab! [laughs]”; and a small

poster of Ziad Rahbani, avant-garde composer, Marxist-Leninist, and son of Fairuz. And, of course, the *oud*, quintessential instrument of *maqam* tradition. Yet, something was puzzling. How did Saied see his clear commitments to telling the story of Palestinian displacement and to Palestinian and regional liberation coming together musically?

At that point, he worked infrequently with vocalists and presented nonvocal solo *oud* or ensemble pieces in musically challenging compositions and arrangements, wearing a black-and-white *kuffieh* onstage. Saied took part in jams with other musicians, appearing obsessed with artistic progress, and often talking of returning to Palestine, of building interest back home. Concern with his instrumental messages being understood by audiences was palpable:

Some people might see it as rubbish, as bullshit; this kind of thing can be interpreted in many ways. . . . At the end of the day you can only hope that it gets to people, you know?

—SAIED SILBAK

There will always be something that matters more than our brother's blood, and more than our own blood: this land, Yusuf. This land.

—DAHER AL-UMAR AL-ZAYDANI IN IBRAHIM NASRALLAH<sup>5</sup>

Saied Silbak would develop a strong connection to his ancestral village during formative years in Shefa'amr, finding inspiration in Ibrahim Nasrallah's novelistic paeans to historic Palestine, in passed-down histories of internal displacement, and through music group learning of anti-imperialist politics in the mid-2000s. Alongside these formative experiences, Saied's primary mode of musical expression came to be *oud*-led instrumental performance, composition without lyrics, and *maqam* experimentation.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter concerns Palestinian musicianship on the "inside" of the Zionist colonial entity, and revolves around the problematic notion of what is often referred to as *musiqā samita*, or "silent music," a designation for Arab nonvocal music. From its position of nonprogrammatic, form-based tradition, Saied seeks to infuse instrumental approaches to composition with referents to Palestinian history and experiences of the *dakhil*, insisting that, though his work does not take the form of the simple protest song of a George Totari, or the conscious poeticism of Kamilya Jubran, nor the rapping

of fellow blue ID-card holders DAM, this music should nevertheless be taken seriously as a contribution to the Palestinian struggle and the revolutionary cultural-political reinvigoration of the internally dispossessed. Drawing on the musical experiences which helped to move Saied further away from the idealized normalization of “peaceful coexistence,” this chapter considers the processes of foment driving a section of young ’48 Palestinians to embrace revolutionary nationalism beyond the pale of Zionist colonization.

Is there a social basis for Saied’s claim that wordless music forms “an even tougher act of resistance?” And, with reference to examples of historic struggle and independent social intervention by Palestinian leftist and nationalist forces, how are local conditions surmounted by Palestinian musicians in the *dakhil* who reject normalization with Israel? In order to address such questions, I historicize Palestinian connections to land, nation, and culture within the confines of the Green Line,<sup>7</sup> dwelling on experiences of internal displacement and paying particular attention to examples of the land- and Nakba-focused confrontations through which committed grassroots musical and political phenomena have emerged. This analysis turns to Shefa’amr as a site of sharp polarization, before exploring Saied’s narrative of a teenage musical “coexistence” project at a neighboring Israeli settlement. Eventually solidifying into a principled position of refusing to work with Israeli musicians or institutions, the collective musicopolitical foundations of Saied’s outlook are expressed in “Wa-ba’dain?!” (And then what?!), a rebellious musical piece and band project built around the *oud*. A further section interrogates Israeli attempts to co-opt Middle East music culture, looking to the messages carried in *oud*-based composition and the use of colloquial language.

The chapter then turns a close ear to instrumentalizing resistance, or the idea that nonvocal music can represent more than itself when wielded by oppressed, colonized, and exploited groups. Musing on Leila Khaled’s call for instruments of social transformation, I draw on analyses developed by Gilroy and Wong on musical symbolism to critique racist power structures, raising further questions about the routes of musical decolonization. Looking at an example of music inspired by the literature of Ibrahim Nasrallah, I argue that the conclusions of Saied set a challenge to views of instrumentalism as “silent,” recentring the position of land and freedom for Palestinians in the *dakhil*. Finally, the discussion of instrumental symbolism and musical expropriation is broadened to take in the reflections

of socialist Cuban composer Leo Brouwer, contemplating decolonized visions of musical nationhood and liberated futures.

### From Zionist Conquest to Land Day: Histories of '48 Palestinian Rejectionism

When I was a kid, Palestine was there in the background. I'd hear of *muzaharat* [demonstrations], the Nakba, and *Yawm al-Ard*—Land Day—particularly on my mother's side . . . being young, they were terms that I didn't really understand, not yet.

I think having an artistic spirit among Palestinian society is definitely *sumud*, and perhaps even more than just the basic ability to simply stay and survive.

—SAIED SILBAK

Around a quarter of Palestinians remaining in the country after the Nakba became “internal refugees” or internally displaced persons within the borders of the Zionist state.<sup>8</sup> Of ninety-five Bedouin tribes living in the Naqab region prior to 1948, only eleven remained after, with many subject to a policy of forced transfer to Jordan.<sup>9</sup> Zionist forces destroyed and depopulated 531 villages and “massacres were the norm, not the exception.”<sup>10</sup> New legal mechanisms, along with the extension of the colonial laws of Britain's occupation, were applied to Palestinians who remained under Zionist governance, subject to constant supervision and control; Arab parties would be outlawed until military rule formally ended in 1966. Geographically fractured and expelled from their places of origin, this section of the disinherited was immediately seen as an existential threat to a Tel Aviv regime that sought to suppress at all costs a return of the Palestinian revolutionary struggle seen under the British. Their dislocation from established population centers was “not inevitable, but deliberate.”<sup>11</sup>

While most refugees ended up in camps in neighboring countries, the internally displaced swelled existing Palestinian tenements, setting up makeshift dwellings on the outskirts of surviving towns or villages; very few residents of Shefa'amr had pre-1948 roots in the town.<sup>12</sup> Like Saied's grandparents, others who remained in historic Palestine inhabited cramped spaces governed by authoritarian rule, ideological enmity, and

campaigns of theft and erasure of their remaining land, livelihoods, and cultural heritage. Cities witnessing widespread destruction and expulsions included Lydd, Ramle, Yafa, Haifa, and Akka; the populations of Safad and Tiberias were expelled in their entirety to make way for cities which are now almost exclusively Jewish. Barely a fifth of all Palestinians remained within the Zionist state, disarmed, disorganized, reduced to economic inferiority, and subject to apartheid law officializing their subcitizenship.<sup>13</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, with the end of military rule largely proving to be a mirage, and with no improvement in the impoverishment and exploitation of the Palestinian working class by Israeli capital, a new generation wrote poetry, voicing the sentiments of many in the *dakhil*. Appearing regularly on street protests, communist poet Tawfiq Zayyad called out beyond the colonialist partition in a message of defiance:

Here we shall stay  
 A wall upon your breast,  
 Facing starvation,  
 Struggling with rags, defying,  
 Singing our songs,  
 Swarming the angry streets with our demonstrations.  
 Filling the dungeons with pride,  
 Rearing vengeance in new generations,  
 Like a thousand prodigies  
 We roam along  
 In Lydda, in Ramle, in the Galilee.<sup>14</sup>

March 30, 1976, marked a turning point in the national consciousness of '48 Palestinians. Responding to a violent Judaization policy, which confiscated land for further Zionist "settlement," Palestinians had in the years preceding become more politically organized in defense of their communities. As meetings and mobilizations took place in 1975, the state announced that vast swathes of Kafr Qasim—site of the Zionist slaughter of forty-nine Palestinian workers in 1956—would be Judaized. Areas would be declared as military zones, building permits would be refused, and suspected activists repressed. Shefa'amr was site of a major confrontation as Israeli police violently attacked a meeting of Palestinian mayors discussing calls for a general strike; pointing to wider class contradictions, some



mayors opposed the strike.<sup>15</sup> Land Day was the culmination of mass strike activity and militant protest, a widespread success in the face of mobilized intimidation from the government, media, and the Zionist Histadrut union. Four were killed by state forces and over 300 arrested.<sup>16</sup> Refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon responded with solidarity strikes. As shown in Jordanian state repression of its anniversary (chapter 2), the reverberations of Land Day were deeply felt beyond the borders of historic Palestine.

In the years that followed, protest campaigns made common cause with other Palestinians fighting back, accompanied by initiatives aimed at cultural awakening and preserving heritage. Related politically to the PFLP, the leftist Abna' al-Balad (People of the country) were leading organizers of the al-Hadaf project in the northern town of Umm al-Fahm during the 1980s, setting up cultural centers, and hosting lectures, theater performances, music classes, and sports.<sup>17</sup> Group activities focused on the rights of women and carried a strong commitment to the liberation of all of historic Palestine, connecting its cultural work to “know your homeland” excursions to uprooted Palestinian villages, and collecting funds to support the 1987 intifada in Gaza and the West Bank. This renaissance of nationalist campaigning was a precursor to the cultural, educational, and return-oriented activities on lands ethnically cleansed during the Nakba, including Saied’s familial village of Damun.

Despite increasing links with countrywide Palestinian uprisings at the grassroots level, the Oslo accords confirmed the Fatah–PLO position that, like the refugees outside of historic Palestine, those who remained in the *dakhil* would be forgotten by the process.<sup>18</sup> Referred to as a “fifth column,” “parasites,”<sup>19</sup> and a “demographic timebomb”<sup>20</sup> by Zionist ideologues, ’48 Palestinians are subject to repression of politics, language, and culture, alongside economic deprivation<sup>21</sup> under a state that terms itself the exclusive homeland of the Jewish people. Saied’s rejection of the designation “Arab-Israeli” is a commitment shared by other young Palestinians.<sup>22</sup> Following the death from cancer of Nazareth-born vocalist Rim Banna in 2018, a miniwave of protest greeted the *Times of Israel*’s obituary, which labeled her an “Arab Israeli,” led online by ’48 Palestinian musicians Tamer Nafar and Maysa Daw.<sup>23</sup> A casual epithet, the hyphenation “Palestinian-Israeli,” is likewise problematic, as it implies equality of categorization or acceptance of a status wedded to colonial power, though it

remains in common use by liberal Zionists, Western academics, and other commentators.<sup>24</sup>

In response to August 2018 demonstrations in Tel Aviv against the Nation State Law, cementing self-determination as the exclusive right of Jews, then Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu took to social media, sharing photos of Palestinian flags in the protests and declaring that “there is no greater testament to the necessity of this law. . . . We will continue to wave the Israeli flag and sing ‘Hatikvah’ [the Israeli national anthem] with great pride.” In the face of this supremacist demagoguery, openly defiant expressions of Palestinianhood contrasted with Hatim Kanaaneh’s reports of the difficulty of raising a Palestinian flag in the protests of the 1970s and 1980s that were dominated by the Israeli Communist Party.<sup>25</sup> Continuing to reject the colonialist narrative, the mobilization in March 2021 of tens of thousands protesting against police violence in Umm al-Fahm was not a hyphenated affair; Palestinian flags were carried en masse in an “Israeli” city.

Twenty-first-century movements across the Green Line have been linked dramatically to events in the Occupied Territories and resistance to wider Israeli incursions in Lebanon and the Middle East, with the winds of solidarity sometimes blowing in both directions. Examples include the spread of opposition to the Prawer Plan targeting Bedouin regions of the southern Naqab, eventually scrapped as an energetic wave of protest spread across historic Palestine in 2013. The same year, descendants of those expelled from the village of Iqrit sparked a protest campaign reminiscent of the al-Hadaf movement in the 1980s. Iqrit was “temporarily” evacuated in 1948 and villagers were never allowed to return,<sup>26</sup> and it has more recently become a site of reclamation and political mobilization, where music and drama play central roles in acts of protest and mass disobedience.<sup>27</sup> Though not always organized along nationalist lines, Palestinians have organized against “gentrification” and Judaization under way in cities like Akka, as private developments are thrown up in rundown and neglected majority Arab neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup> In varying ways, and responding to deepening poverty, new generations have met crisis with resistance.

Palestinian rejectionism is by no means a given, and sections of the Arab population have embraced their Israeli “citizenship,” enjoying its privileges over poorer Palestinians further afield and in their midst. In April 2021, the conservative Islamist Raam party negotiated an unholy

alliance with Netanyahu during election campaigning, before Mansour Abbas led a small Arab group of politicians into a government led by right-wing Zionist Naftali Bennett.<sup>29</sup>

Shefa'amr remains a site of confrontation. Becoming mayor of the city with rightist Likud backing in 1998, Orsan Yassin ordered the conversion of a local monument to the Nakba into a playground and rubbish dump.<sup>30</sup> He later hosted an Israeli "independence day" celebration and declared the city's residents to be unified as Israelis. Yassin's position depended on isolating "extremists" (openly Palestinian Arabs) and furthering "moderate" (compliant "Israeli Arab") interests.<sup>31</sup>

As this chapter shows, the politicomusical conclusions arrived at by Saied were formed in collective conversation with other Palestinians, with enduring references to land and liberation raising serious questions of Yassin's comprador bourgeois claims that Shefa'amr represents "moderation" in opposition to more unified Palestinian towns, such as Umm al-Fahm. As Robinson argues, the increasing instability of the "liberal settler state" has at its heart the problem of the limited rights of the Palestinians.<sup>32</sup> In times of deepening crisis, youth nationalist rejection of normalization and collaboration sets a challenge to the partition of Palestine, or—to reference a composition by Saied—its "Maqtu'a," meaning musical piece, "but also [to] the idea of being cut off from other Palestinians . . . and from the Arab world."

### **"Wa-ba'dein?!": A Rebellion against Settlement "Coexistence" and the Colonized *Oud***

Next to the city there are two settlements, one on Shefa Amr land and the other on another village's land. . . . If you saw the difference between the way that we're living and the way that [settlers] are living, streets, houses, everything, you'd be stunned. At some point when I was fifteen or sixteen, there started a program in Rabin settlement<sup>33</sup> for coexistence . . . young Arab and Israeli artists— theater, performance, drawing . . . you know, the cool stuff. They had these interviews and I was successful in one of them and there was a guy there who was really sweet and we are friends now, a Jewish guy . . . he's very pro-Palestinian, I think. He was the director of music in that project, which went on for six months and then stopped. And what stayed is my relationship with him—he's a pianist, composer, and singer. He

decided to create a little ensemble of me, him, and a percussionist. You know, I was excited, someone wanted me to perform music and to get money from it. And that was a bit of time before I started understanding the conflict, Israel, Palestine, what's happening.

So I went and played . . . and it wasn't political in any way. Maybe it had a statement that we can live together, you know, coexistence kind of style, which I don't believe in today. I believe it on the level of humans and people but I don't believe it on the political and governmental level. I believe it's possible in a fair way but not their way, not the Israeli way. So I played in that ensemble for about three or four years, and I remember that the last two years were when I met other Palestinian musicians and started understanding the true image and the way things truly are. And I remember the conflict within myself, like, "what am I doing?" And that built up gradually until I withdrew completely from that ensemble.

During that process I met Bashir Shihab, a multi-instrumentalist who was a bit older and knew some of my friends. And that's when Palestine became really evident in my life and I started understanding politics and what happened in 1948. . . . In music circles you hear the word Palestine more often. . . . All of a sudden, I was hearing and reading all of these things and I realized where I lived, amongst who, how it works, Israel and how it happened, Palestine and how it was demolished, lots of new information. . . . It took me a long time but now I think there is no other way to do it but to withdraw because if you stay inside that community, it's very tricky. Eventually you're going to talk politics and it's going to blow up in your face because the other side was raised on, "This is Israel, this is our land." But for me, for my teenage years, this is how I got to understand Palestine. That was the beginning of my political education I think, and building up an ideology and an understanding of the situation we're living in. . . . And today, that's all I represent.

–SAIED SILBAK

Elsewhere in this book, narrations of revolutionary and nationalist becomings are seen in their formative development alongside witnessings of uprisings, war, state silencing, and interaction between frontlines of the Palestinian struggle and *ghurba* communities. Based both in the closest proximity of familial displacement and in the belly of the beast of Zionist



11. Saied Silbak onstage in Antwerp, 2017. Photograph supplied by the artist.

colonialism, Saied formed a view of musical sociality which responded to the dilemmas of Israeli hegemony (figure 11). Through collective learnings of anti-Zionist political history and activity in Palestinian music scenes, Saied adopted principles of antinormalization—or refusing to collaborate with Israeli musicians, institutions, or platforms.

For Saied, a refusal to collaborate also involved a process of recognizing the values of antinormalization held by other '48 Palestinians. Discussing the risks involved in taking this Palestinian nationalist and leftist alternative route into music in the “Israeli” context, he offers two seemingly contradictory statements. First, reflecting on a decision to come to Europe and study, he reasons that “in order to break through back home, you’d probably need to collaborate with some Israeli artists and I was

totally not prepared to do that.” But, second, planning his return, “there is also an audience and a hunger for Palestinian artists who *don’t* do that,” adding that “it’s not the only way to break through, you know, to collaborate with Israelis.” Here, Saied acknowledges the existence of the pressures to “coexist”—or co-opt “Arab” artistry into the “Israeli” to have any chance of professional success—and of the simultaneous, nonmainstream existence of a Palestinian crowd keen to find artists that represent a response to their experiences of internal otherness.

The drive to normalization is offered a veneer of liberal respectability by ethnomusicologist Brinner, whose writing dismisses out of hand any attempt at Palestinian independence from the Israeli musical mainstream. While recognizing an “existential dilemma” faced by Palestinian musicians, Brinner rejects the focus on those who have chosen either “flight” or “resistance,” criticizing both Simon Shaheen’s and Bassam Bishara’s decisions to emigrate and Amal Murkus’s and Khaled Jubran’s decisions to remain, while taking “explicitly critical stances towards Israel.”<sup>34</sup> Brinner sees Beckles Willson’s narrative, where earlier cultural interventions of European colonial missions in Palestine are placed alongside European promoted cultural post-Oslo NGOization, as reductive, “too neat” a fit, and rejects any implication that coexistence projects today have anything to do with colonialism.<sup>35</sup> Yet the type of “Palestinian-Israeli” musicians favored by Brinner are those conforming with the colonialist Zionist mainstream or entering into partnerships with Israeli performers. Pushing for “a third way,”<sup>36</sup> meaning “accommodation” from the Palestinian side, would mean acceptance of an unequal position. The settlement music project at Rabin encapsulates a wider trend.

Pressures to collaborate are a key theme in narratives of other musicians of ’48 Palestine. For vocalist Reem Talhami:

It’s hard to be a citizen of this “Israel.” Some people think they should use that and go and make money where they can earn it. You can find people who work in the media, in Israeli radio or television. . . . I would consider that a losing of the way. . . . I would not like to normalize relations.<sup>37</sup>

DAM rapper Tamer Nafar points to the solidarities and differences at the heart of maintaining Palestinian identity on the inside: “I can’t

compare my life to Gaza . . . but we are part of the oppressed.”<sup>38</sup> While some Palestinian artists have left the *dakhil* scene altogether, their works offer references to the struggles under internal colonization. Examples of the latter include Kamilya Jubran’s poetic opposition to those who collaborated in the Jewish Agency land grab in the Naqab,<sup>39</sup> and the protest singing of Kofia band, whose founder George Totari left Nazareth in 1967. Reflecting on her own decision to leave, vocalist Ruba Shamshoum felt that “people make you ashamed of who you are. Being proud. That’s resistance in itself. . . . I only feel blessed because I don’t have to encounter occupation anymore.”<sup>40</sup>

Where Saied’s approach differs from such examples is that, for the most part—and for the period under study—he turned to nontextual, instrumental composition, rather than poetic or lyrical forms. Seeing his musical work as part of a contribution to Palestinian liberation and anti-imperialism, instrumental artistry is framed by Saied in terms of a multifaceted assault:

All resistance acts are needed. Art can definitely be considered another layer of resistant act. . . . People have gotten used to having lyrics, which makes writing instrumental music an even tougher act of resistance.

An example of this work is seen in “Wa-ba‘dein?!” an instrumental project with pianist Akram Haddad, also from Shefa’amr, in which Saied was the main composer for an unreleased album’s worth of music, performed in Palestine in 2012 and 2015, and in Paris in 2016. Also featuring percussion and electric bass, the material was an outgrowth of Saied’s music studies at Beit al-Musiqa in Shefa’amr, setting the tone for a playful and unpredictable approach to composition which Saied continues to develop.

The title track begins with simple piano chords in a major key, backed by a 4/4 beat on bongos. Changing tonality, tempo, and rhythm occur only with the entry of *oud*, which explores *maqam* flavors inhibited by the fixed temperaments of piano and bass. Toying with *jins* fragments from *maqam bayat*, Saied’s *taqasim* reverts back to the “playable” minor second intervals characterizing *maqam kurd* only when the other instruments come back in, with a descending unison run of the whole *maqam*. Other compositions, such as the ironic “Bi-frijha rabbak” (God will solve it), suggest conversation

between piano and *oud*, with alternating improvised sections highlighting jazz influences. “Bala isim” (With no name), too, revolves around the twists and turns of an almost through-composed structure, led on by Saied’s *oud* playing, this time with an enhanced role for piano to explore melodic and harmonic ideas. Saied met the piano in early childhood before *oud*, copying Fairuz’s “Ya ghazayyil” (Oh gazelle) from the playing of his aunt. A close partnership with Akram Haddad pointed to a relationship he had developed with the instrument over the years, enabled by a level of access to the piano that remained out of reach for many other Palestinians.<sup>41</sup>

That said, the *oud* remained the driving force in “Wa-ba‘dein?!” and carries particular messages of Palestinianhood in the *dakhil*. Seeking to project Israel’s imagined roots into the cultural references of the region, Zionist cultural platforms present the Zionist state as “the only place” where *oud* “traditions still thrive,” while Israeli players are presented as guardians of Egyptian and Iraqi schools of *maqam*.<sup>42</sup> The *oud* is de-Arabized to promote the now annual Israeli *Oud* Festival in occupied Jerusalem,<sup>43</sup> in a deliberate attempt to erase Palestinian cultural heritage. In November 2021, Masar Badil issued a statement calling for a boycott of the festival, which quickly attracted the signatures of over 100 Palestinian and international musicians, and highlighted the festival’s links with the physical colonization of Jerusalem:

Live events at the festival are convened by Haim Gouri Zionist Confederation House, founded upon Jerusalem’s colonial conquest and named after a former member of the Palmach, which carried out 1948 massacres including at Sa’sa’ and al-Dawayima. Since its foundation, the festival has been sponsored by Zionist mayors, who play a particular role in boosting its presence. Current rightist mayor Moshe Lion claimed in 2019 that the festival was a way of “establishing dialogue,” while simultaneously supporting the US Trump administration’s moving of its embassy to Jerusalem as “the only fitting location for embassies in the state of Israel.” In May 2021, he described the Zionist colonisation of Sheikh Jarrah as a “property dispute” and blamed Palestinians for “igniting violence.” . . . Israeli courts are attempting to force Sheikh Jarrah families into accepting “temporary ownership” of their homes by a Zionist settler organisation.<sup>44</sup>



The mayor's office has led cheerleading of the festival, while supporting house demolitions, urban land grabs, and the expulsion of Palestinians from the city. Colonial expansion is accompanied by cultural overtures seeking to inscribe Israel into histories of regional music making. Examples include the former Likud mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat's 2012 naming of Umm Kulthum Street in Beit Hanina, in a ceremony featuring pro-IDF vocalist Nissren Kader, who performed karaoke-reverbed versions of the Egyptian star's repertoire. For Anton Shammās, "hegemonic Israeli politics towards the Arabs, in all of its institutionalized forms, is based first and foremost on kitsch."<sup>45</sup> While Netanyahu had proclaimed the supremacy of the "Hatikvah," the anthem also featured in the *oud* tuition methods of pro-Zionist quacks.<sup>46</sup> Later, as Gulf states promoted normalization, Emirati oudist Ahmed al-Mansouri recorded the piece. Pointing to the manipulative power of music, instruments and genres are subject to colonization.

I see a further response to this situation in the discourse between Saied's instrumental works and traditional practices, a point relating as much to the naming of pieces as to their content. While he has composed innovative pieces within standard regional forms, such as his "Sama'i nikriz," a composition in the *sama'i* form using a *maqam* rarely used as primary material, other pieces are ascribed provocative titles in a rather unusual approach to Arab instrumentalism. Literally translated as "And then what?!", "Wa-ba'dein?!" has wider colloquial implications and exclamatory use among Palestinians, as Saied explains:

Like, "wa-ba'dein ma' kull . . . ?": "until when are we going to put up with this shit?"—that's what it means. . . . In Arabic, when something happens over and over and you're not happy with it, most people would go, "[tut] wa-ba'dein ya'ni?!" until when? "*Khalas, wa-ba'dein?!*"

The phrase "wa-ba'dein?!" is understood by Palestinians in widespread locations. While vocal tone and circumstance are defining, in some contexts it was felt to mean, "so what?!", "WTF?!", or "stop doing that!" Applied to Gaza, it was thought to mean, "we are fed up with this . . . it sucks . . . we need a change for the better." Others agreed with the idea that the phrase can be a demand rather than a question. Palestinian-Egyptian vocalist and scholar Yara Salahiddeen advises: "Say it louder and it becomes a threat!"<sup>47</sup> Read as a response to the attempt to submerge Arab and

Palestinian musical traditions under the designation “Israeli,” “Bala isim” speaks to the topography that comes with cultural colonialism, while “Maqtu’a” links musical structure to the partition of Arab lands. Combined with the demands made through the project as a whole, the pressures to accept a fate as a “good Arab” are challenged instrumentally through a renewal of *maqam* tradition and indigenous *lahja*. Reclaiming the *oud*—a demand that would appear strange in other areas of the *ghurba*—is an imperative of Saied’s musical strategy.

### Land and Liberation: Instrumentalizing Resistance

Do you keep art related to politics? Do you leave lots of space for interpretation? How do you bring it? . . . If you’re very clear and very convinced and you’re putting up a fight against something that you know is not right and fair, I think you stick to that throughout your artistic journey.

–SAIED SILBAK

The most silent of the arts . . . [music] is also the most . . . esoteric and difficult to discuss.

–EDWARD SAIED<sup>48</sup>

Concerned with black modernisms and responses to modernity, Gilroy argues that, in the case of Afro-Atlantic cultural creation, “The question of racial terror always remains in view when these modernisms are discussed because imaginative proximity to terror is their inaugural experience.”<sup>49</sup> For U.S. descendants of slavery, for example, traces of a necessarily painful expression serve to embed historical memories into the cultural output of black artistry. Gilroy hears “the irrepressible rhythms of the once forbidden drum” in the lifeworks of organic black intellectuals falling outside of official patronage in Britain and the United States. In postslavery societies, he argues, the exclusion from modern society of diaspora blacks finds expression in music, “refined and developed so that it provides an enhanced mode of communication beyond the petty power of words—spoken or written.”<sup>50</sup>

A range of key contributions to black musics is discussed by Gilroy, including influential rapper Rakim and the antiapartheid messages of

Britain-based Macka B and Kofi, but I attribute particular relevance here to his commentary of the instrumentalism of Jimi Hendrix. Elsewhere, with an eye on Hendrix's profoundly treasonous journey from U.S. army to antiwar figure, Gilroy finds in the blazing electric guitar arrangement of the "Star Spangled Banner" "a systematically artful assault on the patriotic musical heart of the imperial nation in whose armed forces he had previously served with pride."<sup>51</sup> Juxtaposed with the debates of the time, this live recording and the instrumental "Third Stone from the Sun" presented "revolutionary feeling" and "the sound of the future being enlisted in the struggle against racism."<sup>52</sup>

There is also an intriguing confluence in the recognition of Hendrix's turn to more politically engaged sounds when, in 1969, he assembled an all-black band. In an important juncture in Saied's early musical life, growing interests in the Palestinian cause and familial village history were accompanied by rejecting collaboration with Israeli musicians. Yet, whereas Hendrix embraced the figure of the wandering gypsy and "nonnational forms of blackness,"<sup>53</sup> Saied embraced roots that were geographically and politically pinned to a progressive nationalism that addressed the living colonialism to which Palestinian youth are subjected, consciously incorporating historical memories into alternative creativity. Hinted at in the process of discussion, reading, and listening of indigenous literatures and musics, it is important to recognize that Saied represents something, as one among a generation of '48 Palestinians who have no truck with cycles of Knesset reaction and who reject their position as "Palestinian-Israelis." What is termed "racial terror" by Gilroy is analogous to a racist, colonialist present described by Himmat Zubi as an "ongoing Nakba."<sup>54</sup> Proximities to Zionist terror are not easily widened for Palestinians in the *dakhil* who, as well as witnessing the wars of "their" state on their fellow Palestinians in Gaza and beyond, also face the brunt of enduring campaigns of ethnic cleansing within the official borders of the Israeli project. Where Hendrix is termed a "dissident innovator,"<sup>55</sup> Palestinian musicians who have come to reject normalization in favor of national resistance do so by carrying with them the scars of past and present struggles with Zionist colonization.

Leila Khaled's Marxist formulation on the need for a "revolutionary *instrument* for the transformation of Arab society"<sup>56</sup> is interesting when thought of in a musical sense. As a leading cadre of the socialist trend, the

instrument she prescribed to overcome Arab reaction was the revolutionary communist organization. Theorized by Kanafani, the value of the “instrument of organization” (*al-alat al-tanzimiya*) comes in its ability to confront national and class adversaries, while fortifying the oppressed against the ills of underdevelopment.<sup>57</sup> Could musical instruments also provide tools for liberation?

Related to the questions of instrumentalism discussed so far, I will outline briefly three interlinked issues accentuated in Palestine-based musicianship following the Nakba. First, the “situation of interruption”<sup>58</sup> suffered in music pedagogy with the exodus of experienced musicians and the Zionist assault on population centers. The latter resulted in Palestine possessing a less easily pinpointed *maqam* language, hinted at by Al Khatib in relation to Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, which spurred some post-Nakba musicians into identifying instead with different Arab schools or toward sporadically occurring fields of transmission on a local level—such as the work of composer and instrumentalist Hikmat Shaheen in Tarshiha. Second, there has been necessarily more attachment to poetic forms, and centrally those that promote the national liberation movement and preserve collective memories of Palestine. Palestinian music was, prior to 1948, primarily vocal, yet the situation since Balfour and Sykes-Picot has determined the accentuation of conscious poetry. And third, the traditional position accorded to nonvocal music in Mashriq histories does not reach the levels of appreciation for song forms based on poetry.<sup>59</sup>

Palestinian instrumental traditions have nevertheless taken on a range of forms among generations of the displaced, sometimes challenging longstanding notions of what constitutes a traditional instrument and bringing seemingly highbrow musical influences to the masses, often hand in hand with revolutionary resistance music. Jerusalemite singer Mustafa al-Kurd was both an important musical songwriter of the Palestinian revolution after the 1960s and an accomplished *oud* player, frequently performing *taqasim* between nationalist anthems. Some intifada-era albums carried instrumental pieces featuring *oud*, *buzuq*, *qanun*, *shabbabeh*, and *tabla*,<sup>60</sup> and the arrangements of Shafiq Kabha, arguably the stand-out proponent of the musical nationalism of '48 Palestinians, relied heavily on long solo sections by *org* (Arabized keyboard) players, enabling *dabke* sections at wedding performances, while attempting to recreate the sounds of the rural *mijwiz* electronically. Leftist audiences in Egypt

responded to Sheikh Imam's *taqasim* almost as vocally as to his singing of protest lyrics, while outside of these more openly politicized examples, crowd reactions during a live Jerusalem performance in 1982 by Egyptian *oud* player George Michel conveyed rapturous enthusiasm for *tarab* tradition among many Palestinians. Aside from occasional appearances with highly skilled vocalists, including Palestinian *mutribin* Ibrahim Azzam and Sanaa Moussa, the work of Simon Shaheen has helped reestablish instrumentalism at the heart of Arab and Palestinian *maqam* tradition or to restore a broken link with the pre-Nakba development of Palestinian musicianship.

It seems useful to consider whether the traditional notion of *musiqat samita*, or "silent music," is subject to challenge in situations of social upheaval and popular rebellion. We have already seen that Palestinian performance of *maqam*-based traditions in Jordan went hand in hand with collective resistance to the repression of revolutionary poetry in the camps, and that younger musicians in Egypt met social insurrection by building bridges to earlier periods when Palestinians had channeled *oud* and *buzuq* in new, radical directions. In a sense, Palestinian musicians have long overthrown the idea that music can or should speak silently.

In 2018, Saied composed and recorded a new piece, "Zahir," explaining:

Zahir al-'Umar al-Zidani (1689–1775)<sup>61</sup> was a Palestinian ruler of Northern Palestine and attempted to free the country from the Ottoman empire. . . . This piece was written in his honor, summing up his amazing, powerful journey, mourning his death and betrayal, and finally absorbing his power and continuing the journey.

Musically, "Zahir" continues Saied's earlier works in terms of the overall structure, offering a platform to searching *oud* improvisation and interplay with piano, and exhibiting tendencies to interrupt and modify expected rhythmic patterns. From the outset, this theme of spatiotemporal suspension is established by the *oud*, exploiting silence and *rallentando* phrasing, before setting a three-beat rhythm around a simple riff-like pattern, broken up by odd groupings of notes. In a playful approach to *maqam*, Saied's *oud* works through a *taqasim* between the harmonic phrasing of Haddad's piano. Here, as in "Wa-ba'dein?!", Saied incorporates fleeting notes from *maqam bayat*—unplayable by the piano—while the pianist

remains roughly in *maqam kurd* territory, suggesting notions of the possible and impossible, tradition and Westernization.

Saied's commitment to continuing the journey of Zahir al-'Umar came through his reading of Ibrahim Nasrallah's dramatization of the life of Daher<sup>62</sup> in *The Lanterns of the King of Galilee*. He learned of the author's work through meeting Bashir Shihab and other politically conscious musicians. The novelist introduces "a luminous part of our popular consciousness and the ongoing struggle of the people who have populated and given life to the land of Palestine."<sup>63</sup> In the novel, Nasrallah charts Zahir al-'Umar's life from childhood in the city of Tiberias, where he was born into relative nobility, his father serving as *multazim*, tax collector for the Ottoman Empire. Unable to be breastfed by his real mother, the boy drinks milk from the horse Halima, an act markedly significant for a spiritual and material connection to the land, which Umar and his adoptive mother, actually his older sister, maintain throughout the story; Najma never wears shoes and walks barefoot to feel closer to the earth. Zahir's spirit of fairness and solidarity leads him to witness the Ottoman siege and massacre at Bi'na and as *multazim* after his father, he quickly becomes an enemy of the empire, rescuing neighboring villages and cities from cruel leaders appointed by a succession of pashas governing from Damascus. In the course of a few decades, Daher comes to rule a virtually autonomous Palestine, setting his forces up for wider confrontation with the Ottoman state. Despite his wealth, the humility of Daher and Najma is poignant throughout the novel, as he modernizes Akka and other towns and refuses to bow to extortion. As the sultan's forces close in around them at Tiberias, Daher tells his people,

Life will proceed normally. . . . We're going to buy and sell, cook and bake. We'll go fishing too, since they can't blockade us from the lake, and if weddings have been planned, they'll be celebrated at their scheduled times. We're not going to let them control our lives just because they have more cannons than we do!<sup>64</sup>

Faced with betrayal from his brother, sons, and closest allies, Daher remarks that the land is more important than blood.

Saied's drive toward "absorbing the power" of Daher contrasts with the Nakba story of powerlessness told at the beginning of this chapter. Whereas Gilroy finds an "enhanced mode of communication" among black people

excluded from societies whose political economy depended on slavery, emerging in forms “beyond words,” there is something literal in the juxtaposition of music and verbalized explanations of its force. When Silmi reminds us that Palestinian connections to land through uprooting constitute a reality not an illusion,<sup>65</sup> the active literary substance is historic Palestine as a material body. The transformation of society to which Saied seeks to contribute is built, in other words, on subverting *musiqqa samita* by incorporating referents to a land before its dismemberment; pointing to the role of literary imagination in the development of national thought, Nasrallah’s text mentions the village of Damun no fewer than eight times. Through an act of liberation, Saied channels this literary resource into an instrumental voicing of the popular consciousness advocated by Nasrallah.

Saied enlists narratives of the past in the struggles of the present. Though their approaches differ, his artistic vision draws parallels with his one-time *oud* teacher Ahmad Al Khatib, described by Saied as a musical “guru.” In our discussion of the dwindling number of *maqamat* in common use, Ahmad advocated the critical edge of *maqam* tradition, carrying notions of renewal, improvisation, and revolution. There are, of course, limitations to the innovations brought into forms of traditional musicianship and it seems instructive to see the commitment of young Jerusalamite and ’48 Palestinian musicians including Saied, Salma Abbasi, Anan Makhoul, Samer Asakli (*oud*), Mtanes Nahas (*buzuq*), and Haitam Bishara (percussion) as maintaining a traditional core alongside a drive to push musical boundaries. Interest in village histories since Land Day has coincided with new generations devoting themselves to musical heritage. In Saied’s case, if the “demands” of “Wa-ba‘dein?!” were interpreted meaningfully by other Palestinians, it is suggestive that dedication to such a widely known figure as Daher would enable the thought processes embedded in Saied’s composition to be understood as having transformative, anti-colonial qualities, regardless of Daher’s temporal distance from contemporary struggles.

The weaving of associative and timbral relationships to rural Palestine forms part of a wider tapestry of musiconarrative expression. While Saied and the other players mentioned have not always lent their instrumental musicianship to genres directly linked to performances dedicated to the land—such as the traditional poetics of El-Funoun or Dalal Abu Amneh, or to the preservation of *‘ataba*, *dal’una*, *mijana*, and so on—their use of

instruments made from natural materials and eschewing the dominating timbral influences of the electric/electronic speaks on other levels to rurality. As if to demonstrate what this choice means in the *dakhil* context, when compared to kitsch Israeli covers of Umm Kulthum, for example, the works of Saied and other Palestinians reconnecting to *maqam* through traditionally acoustic instrumentation reestablishes a bridge to pre-Nakba *maqam* creativity, and into concerted, antinormalized acts of resistance. The acoustic qualities of the *oud* speak to the agrarian surroundings of historic Palestine in ways that the over-reverb pageantry of cultural colonialism in occupied Jerusalem could not. Further highlighting the inspirations of land to this section of Palestinian youth, ethnically cleansed rural spaces are reclaimed in *sumud*-oriented musical gatherings.

Ethnomusicologist Chuen-Fung Wong reports on fieldwork with Palestinian *oud* player Samer Totah who, like Saied, has worked mainly with wordless forms of composition.<sup>66</sup> Totah focuses on emotion and historical memory, commemorating such events as the Zionist-imposed curfew and siege of Ramallah in 2003. His arrangements are influenced strongly by Totah's mentor Khaled Jubran, by Lebanese *tarab* scholar Ali Jihad Racy, and by Simon Shaheen. Saied cites similar influences, and his efforts to contribute to Palestinian liberation through music are expressed both through and beyond the music itself; Totah also refuses to perform with Israeli musicians. For many Palestinians, writes Wong, artistic progress becomes a way of presenting alternatives; he cites the band Sabreen, whose "innovation and professionalism were considered by many as emblematic of the Palestinian musical future." Involved in this notion are commitments to indigenous space, rejecting normalization in the process of presenting Palestinian emblems of instrumentalism outside of the co-opted liberalism bound by Zionist totality.

At this point, I wish to reflect on what I see as the trajectory of Leila Khaled and Ghassan Kanafani's comments on instruments for the transformation of society, or what is entailed culturally by the results of the struggle for national liberation and socialism. Written in the decades after the Cuban revolution, the arguments of contemporary composer, guitarist, and Communist Party activist Leo Brouwer offer uniquely positioned thoughts on instrumentalism on a decolonized land, linked to the aims of Saied and other radical musicians. Though the composer's immersion in lived experience exerts a radical influence, the past through which



national consciousness is founded cannot again be experienced, but rather must be studied from the standpoint of the present: “We search our history in order to have our own truths. It is absolutely necessary that we know the historical past to create in the present, in our ‘today.’”<sup>67</sup> A prolific nonvocal composer and grassroots organizer of music, Brouwer sought to express the revolutionary Cubanness of his work through reversing the xenophobic antiblackness of eras of dictatorship and colonization, connecting to pan-Latin American cultural heritage and, crucially, Afro-Cubanism as part of the socialist unity promoted by *Cubanidad*, or a shared Cuban identity transcending racial, gender, or other characteristics.<sup>68</sup> Revealing in this narrative is the conscious effort of the committed musician to arrive at an artistic vision of the future through drawing on the history of the nation.

In the same text, Brouwer sows the seeds of later arguments for “universal” music culture in terms of the historic struggle:

The solution for a colonized country is in suppressing the defining features of the oppressing culture and not the common features with universal culture.<sup>69</sup>

Combining ideology, politics, and art, Brouwer would go on to clarify his view that an “international world of ideas” is inseparable from “the national roots that express our culture.”<sup>70</sup> The latter is expressed partly in works that evoke the land and natural scenery.<sup>71</sup> In its development as part of the liberation struggle, I see this universalism as quite different from that ostensibly carried through the coexistence projects rejected by Saïed. Instead, the “national”—and, indeed, the “we”—referred to by Brouwer has similarities with the kinds of comradeship described by Jodi Dean,<sup>72</sup> indexing the new relations of shared history built through organized struggle and solidarity. Or, as Fanon writes,

It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this dual emergence, in fact, is the unique focus of all culture.<sup>73</sup>

The liberated guitar of Brouwer emerged with and spurred on a continental and international shift where the instrument appeared in the hands

of revolutionaries, socialists, and national liberationists: in Cuba, it took on a galvanizing role behind revolutionary anthems, while dissident innovators in Latin America performed under conditions of national oppression, including Violeta Parra and Victor Jara of Chile. Though Hendrix operated on another plane, Gilroy's descriptions of "revolutionary feeling" and "sounds of the future" are hugely apt to such instrumentalizations of resistance. Musical emblems of a Palestinian future heard by Wong are linked to these experiences by the internationalism at the heart of many of their approaches, coexisting with commitments to reassert the liberated "national" of Brouwer and carrying with them the significance of reclaiming indigenous expression facing attempted co-option and erasure with the colonization of Palestine.

### Conclusions: Gravediggers of Zionist Colonialism

Saied's *oud*-centered composition has been placed in this chapter alongside grassroots responses to colonial reality, with the popularity of Palestinian and Arab traditional culture among young '48 Palestinians continuing to gain ground as Israeli political economy and attendant cultural supremacy slides into meltdown. An example of one kind of musical response to the social crisis affecting Palestinians, the stated aims of Saied's instrumentalism—and the colloquially voiced frustrations that seeped into titles of the pieces introduced during his project with Akram Haddad—speak to the broader experiences of sections of internally displaced people. My hearing of the musical arrangements referenced in this chapter is that the Palestinian *oud* finds alternative grassroots spaces via revolutionary nationalism to express musical indigeneity springing from an ongoing Nakba.

A previous chapter looked at musical expressions of Palestinianness in the *ghurba* in terms of their *lahajat musiqiya*, or musical dialects. For Saied, instrumentalism expresses meanings embedded in performance that speak to a context and a history under threat of colonial erasure. Allied to his aim to create an aesthetics of resistance, language plays an important role in spite of an absence of lyrics. "Wa-ba'dein?!" voices the dialects of youth, brought into play in order to highlight meaning, questioning, and demands from a position of marginalization. That the music itself carries unpredictable qualities honed by Saied alongside his study of *maqam*

may also be seen as the placing of spontaneity alongside organization, while navigating dynamic relationships between tradition and experimentation. “Wa-ba‘dein?!” references grassroots processes of questioning and critique prevalent in *sumud* narratives across locations of Palestinian displacement, including those presented by musicians, exemplified earlier by Sabreen. It is revealing of the post-Oslo impasse that such questions are being asked by ’48 Palestinians. I will further examine this tendency of musicians to embody *sumud*-as-critique alongside analysis of genre and communality in Gaza in the next chapter.

Following commentaries that see the inequalities endemic to the Zionist state as flowing from deliberate policies of urbicide and historically furthering the breakup of Palestinian society, the material I have presented shows that, out of its own contradictions, the Israeli regime creates its own gravediggers. At key junctures of economic and political crisis, internally displaced, racially oppressed, and working-class Palestinians see their unequal position exacerbated and they seek their own independent means of political and cultural expression. In his counternarrative to “coexistence,” Saied offers a way forward that chimes with the collective experience of many of his generation, echoing the stands taken by earlier projects like al-Hadaf, campaigns to reconnect to the land, or the musically framed social explosion of May 2021: no to normalization, yes to the liberation of Palestine. Here, alternative movements, nationalist disaffection, and internal colonialism faced by Palestinians in the *dakhil* are set against a crisis that is global, and where music is inseparable from visions of a decolonized future.

## CHAPTER 6

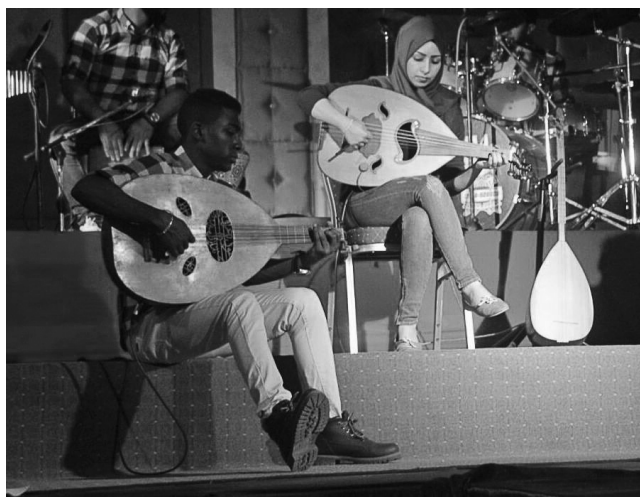
### "*Ahla ayyam*": The Most Beautiful Days

#### *Tarab, al-Watan, and Gaza's New Generation of Musicians*

In November 2017, inside the shared kitchen in a block of shared dorms for newly arrived refugees near Liverpool's Chinatown, Reem Anbar held an impromptu *sahra* (evening jam) with a glossy-voiced Yemeni, also sent to the strict, Home Office block following a stay in an airport prison cell. They reeled through Fairuz's "Nassam 'alayna al-hawa," Umm Kulthum, and *Khaliji* pop (the young Yemeni woman had grown up in the Emirates), with Reem setting the mood in between with *oud taqasim*. Before dispersal to refugee housing in the English northwest and Yorkshire, they would keep jamming, on and off, joined by Syrian, Kurdish, and East European listeners.

Though she had been in Britain only a few days, Reem found likeminded people to play with and led the group in collective enjoyment, despite all of the refugees facing having to navigate treacherous legal and social processes. In a borstal kitchen, Reem's *oud* brought the opportunity to enjoy something close to kinship, with laughter over forgotten lyrics. She describes her musical drive:

Every year they'd say "*khalas*," another year of school and you'll stop playing *oud*. I told them, no. They'd say, "ah, when you go to university you'll stop." No! "When you get married or have a baby you'll stop," No! [laughs] Everyone would say that, friends, family, relations, even people at work. They ask, "Do you still play?" For me, it's something essential in my life. When I was in Gaza as a kid, there would be wars. We'd be stuck inside, bored, with no electricity, and I had that desire to play—and to play my whole life. Even when I slept I'd be playing *oud*.



12. Said Fadel and Reem Anbar play *oud* at Hilal al-Ahmar in an early Sol Band gig, 2016. Photo supplied by the artists.

Following the analysis in chapter 5 of the significance of instrumentalism for internally displaced Palestinians, attention now returns to Gaza, to a set of narratives which both critique the current terrain and allow for deeper study of Palestinian sociomusical aesthetics projected into the early twenty-first century. Reem Anbar (*oud*), Rawan Okasha (vocals), and Said Fadel (keyboard, *oud*, and vocals) grew up in Gaza City, learning to play and sing in their neighborhoods (figure 12). The three became involved in music as the frustrations of the Oslo years spilled into the al-Aqsa intifada. In the early 2000s, all performed publicly at concerts in Gaza as well as in a variety of settings offstage; Reem and Said also found employment in teaching and music therapy. At the time of writing, Said remains a member of Sol Band between Istanbul and Gaza, an ensemble of evolving membership, while Reem performs in Britain with Gazelleband and as a soloist. Rawan fronted the band Dawaween and now mainly sings at home in Gaza. Though Reem and Said have left Palestine and navigate new situations of exile, their stories lead back to Palestine, and to collaborative formative years of intense creativity and social solidarity.

Recognizing that Gaza remains a center of colonial repression and popular resistance, I begin by introducing its revolutionary energies in the eyes of other Palestinians, a recurring subplot of this chapter. This idea

contextualizes discussion on several interrelated themes, including views of the musicians on genres appearing in their upbringings and music careers. Following a theoretical and historical outline of what is described through these overlapping traditions, I present three ethnographies, homing in on how these aesthetic modes are utilized by refugee youth and on the social spaces carved out by the musicians and their coorganizers. Musical, poetic, and sociopolitical statements expressed by the three musicians offer new reflections on Gaza's history of struggle, and catalyze analysis of musical trajectories. Of particular importance is understanding how youth musicians navigate a post-Oslo field shaped by widespread NGOization<sup>1</sup> and by extreme conditions of Zionist war and political-economic blockade. Also witnessing a deepening crisis of Palestinian leadership, I ask what narratives are projected through the spaces found by the musicians, and whether *sumud* retains its significance for young musicians in Gaza.

### Gaza's Intifada Spirit

Writing on Gaza in a poetic article published in 1973, Mahmoud Darwish lauded its having "different values" than other regions of Palestine and, by implication, than the wider world.<sup>2</sup> In Gaza, he wrote, people were not pushed by time to "coldly contemplate life." There, time itself is a distinctly nonneutral element and offers no opportunity for relaxation, pushing its inhabitants "to explode and collide with the truth," to "storm the burning noon." Published in the wake of the 1967 Naksa, the poet's description of Gaza as living under siege and as a focal point of popular resistance may be viewed prophetically. Lighting the spark<sup>3</sup> for the 1987 first intifada, Gaza became a central region of the new uprising in 2000, the March of Return in 2018, and the scene of other protest movements and armed confrontations in the intervening years. Israel's devastating and bloody military interventions serve as collective punishment for Gaza's "refusal to be a docile ghetto."<sup>4</sup> The displaced of Gaza are a mainstay of rejectionism and collective *sumud* through a post-Oslo political process which has systematically underdeveloped the southern Palestinian economy, while breeding dependency in officialized cultural spheres.

Blockaded Gaza's documented struggle for economic survival,<sup>5</sup> along with the Zionist bombing and demolition of sites for cultural organizing

and recreation,<sup>6</sup> has meant a fight by Palestinian musicians for the very space in which to perform. It is true of Palestinian music tradition that many “concerts” have taken place in the streets, with weddings a notable focus of song and dance. Gaza performances by Shafiq Kabha (from 1980), Sabreen (in 1993), Reem Talhami (in 1992 and 2013), and other visiting Palestinians (as well as occasional guests such as Syrian actor Duraid Lahham, who visited repeatedly) often took place at indoor public theaters like the Ma’had Faransi (French Institute in Gaza City), the Rashad al-Shawwa (Rimal), Hilal al-Ahmar (Khan Younis), the Said al-Mashal (Shati’), or, more recently, at the Gaza branch of the Edward Said National Conservatory for Music (Tall al-Hawa).

Theater projects, national commemorations, and political events have also used some of these venues, while a number of dilapidated or smaller, community-maintained venues house smaller gatherings. All are subject to an unpredictable energy crisis, Israeli bellicosity, and a range of social challenges. The latter includes pressure from socially conservative forces often identified with Hamas; however, fatwas or orders to stop performing typically come from individual preachers or street-level groups, and are not clearly associated with political parties. My analysis heeds the warnings of El Said, Meari, and Pratt of adopting a “secular/Islamist binary,”<sup>7</sup> with clear signs that, in the case of Palestine, narratives on an apparent societal drift are often dominated by Zionist and imperialist interests and power dynamics expressive of broader national, regional, and international crises. Addressing questions of whether social conservatism has a particular impact on women means, moreover, seeing the international roots of political Islam,<sup>8</sup> with the relative rise of religiously inspired movements coinciding with the fall of the socialist camp and moves to recolonize the Middle East.

There are few signs that such developments have dampened either the creative spirit of those living in Gaza or their commitment to narratives of Palestinian liberation. Like the doggedness in the face of overwhelming adversity praised by Darwish, young Palestinians have increasingly taken matters into their own hands through self-education and collective development of artistry, exhibiting several key features of underground music scenes as outlined by Jones,<sup>9</sup> and seen by Kim as linking concepts of “realness” to working-class marginalization.<sup>10</sup> Returning to Massad’s arguments on cultural expression under colonialism, an important theme

of this chapter concerns the reappropriation of tradition by a new generation. Related to the “old is best” views of sections of other Arab populations toward musical authenticity,<sup>11</sup> working-class refugees in Gaza have wielded *maqam* heritage for their own, collective use, while maintaining protagonist connections to the sounds of Palestinian national revolution. I see such moves as distinct from traditional street mobilizations associated with the arrival of a well-known *zajjal*, for instance, yet evocative of their mass energy—and of the historic cosmopolitanism of pre-Nakba Palestine, as detailed by Nur Masalha and explored in a later section of the chapter. *Ruh* (“soul” or “spirit”) in descriptions of Gaza is, I add, expressive of the refugee makeup of its population and its history of defiance of colonial domination. Gaza’s energies see young musicians recenter the idea of *farah*, or joy through music, in dynamic relationships with nation and heritage.

### **Palestinian Music Tradition in a New Context**

The three musicians are all UNRWA-registered refugees, with familial origins further north<sup>12</sup> in the demolished village of Dimra (Rawan) and the western coastal cities of Yafa (Said) and Haifa (Reem). Growing up within five square kilometers of each other in a region hit by frequent Israeli bombing campaigns, an economic blockade sparking rising proletarianization among their parents’ generation, and with unemployment and severe disadvantage affecting the young, their paths into music have similarities and contrasts. Though their stories form part of the same communal environment, their musical trajectories and migrant stories have diverged somewhat from each other. All, however, experienced formative exposure to three overlapping traditions of *tarab*, *watani*, and *turathi* (adjective of *turath*) musics, serving to both challenge and reinforce existing definitions. There are no clear dividing lines between each “genre,” itself an inadequate descriptor. As shown by Jalal and Boulos,<sup>13</sup> Palestinian music has historically been socially porous, encapsulating rural tradition and urban developments impacted heavily by migration and colonialism, through performance contexts which traverse boundaries between celebration and protest. I offer the following theorizations on each tradition in light of their use by the contributors to this chapter, highlighting the aesthetic and social concepts they conjure up.



### *Musiqā Tarabiya*

Often escaping clear definition as a musical genre, *tarab* is seen as a sociological cultural field with its own associated set of performers, listeners, and social contexts, and its own etymological and musical content. Detailing the performance practice in the courts of early ‘Abbasid-era Baghdad, Sawa defines *tarab* as “an acute emotion of joy or grief,” drawing on the writings of al-Isbahani to convey the importance placed on musicians’ abilities to produce emotional reactions in listeners.<sup>14</sup> Noting that ethnomusicologists have focused so far on its mystical qualities, Racy describes *tarab* as a “secular, modally structured and professionally oriented tradition”<sup>15</sup> and an important “world culture,”<sup>16</sup> whose modern development harks back to previous centuries.

Covering its poetic base, codes of behavior, *maqam* theory, and idiomatic musical applications, Racy’s examination of *tarab* suggests the existence of multiple contexts of performance, not limited to the homes and social spaces of nascent Arab bourgeoisies in early twentieth-century cities. These contexts included coffee houses in working-class districts, however much they were frowned on by elites. In Gaza, Reem and Said performed regularly among friends in shisha cafés by the seafront, while both have in different ways reappropriated public space in neighborhoods and on the city streets.

*Tarab* thereby meets Palestinian street traditions, hinting at another key component of the *tarab* tradition, according to Racy and Shannon,<sup>17</sup> as an essentially collective experience, where *sammi’a* (“cultivated listeners,” Racy) form a “lifeline” for performing musicians. Said and Rawan grew up in families comprising generations of musicians, with instruction and reflection part of a casual process; the *tarab* tradition is noted by Palestinian *oud* and violin player Simon Shaheen as valuing critical listening.<sup>18</sup> Racy’s analysis of the traditional *takht* ensemble as a field of learning, raising musicians to the same level, suggests values of equality and egalitarianism within the group. The popularity of *tarab* enables the empowerment of women in particular, “to traverse social and sexual boundaries.”<sup>19</sup> Though Reem, Rawan, and other women have formed a minority in the ensembles in which they have sung and played, the context of performance is not compartmentalized in terms of gender.

In the phraseology of the Gaza musicians *musiqa tarabiya* (*tarab* music) is personified around the figure of *al-sitt* (the lady) Umm Kulthum as a persistent presence in their upbringing and of listening/performing into adulthood; her music continues to be heard in many Palestinian households a half-century after her passing. Sometimes verbalized as an affinity with “old” and “authentic” (*asil*), as opposed to “modern” pop (*hadith*), the transmission of this repertoire through sung and instrumentalized performance is a collective process. All three recount participating in *jalsat*, small musical gatherings of family members and neighbors, typically giving nonmusicians present the opportunity to sing along, make requests, or offer words of encouragement. Seeing *tarab* as “enchantment,” via the work of Umm Kulthum, Danielson conceptualizes *tarab* culture as a “fluid order,” with “forces, movements, and relationships of performer and audiences predicated a musical product that is—despite its orchestras and electronics—quite unlike a Western concert.”<sup>20</sup> Umm Kulthum and her alliances of (mostly) Egyptian composers and poets enraptured audiences with songs of intense love and loss, and, through historical junctures of colonial confrontation, independence, and war, made musical statements interpreted as nationalist and religious in content.<sup>21</sup> Kulthum’s work sometimes referenced Palestine directly, notably in “Asbaha ‘indi al-an bunduqiya,” Abdel Wahab’s composition to a Nizar Qabbani poem in 1969:

Now I have a rifle  
Take me with you to Palestine.

The repertoire of Gaza Palestinians takes up Umm Kulthum’s catalog more broadly, with instrumental sections forming part of oral training outside of formal music education. As discussed in previous chapters, non-vocal forms are wielded for a variety of purposes in the Palestinian case. Reem Anbar’s focus on *oud taqasim* improvisation is a case in point and, I suggest, relies no less on listener response as music set to words. As an early member of Sol Band, she recalls complaining that their music was too modern and superficial (*tafha*):

So they gave me a solo spot during our set at the concert . . . a *taqasim* followed by an instrumental version of “Lissa fakir” [“Do you still

remember?" by Umm Kulthum]. There were hundreds of people clapping and I could hear someone shouting "*Allah 'aleiki!*" [a typical *tarab* exclamation].

For Shannon, *tarab* "as an affective presence results from the collective engagement of artists and audiences in the construction of musical experience."<sup>22</sup> The production and performance of instrumental music in Gaza is built around a communality shaped by a very different lived context to the *jalsat* of upwardly mobile Arabs, which existed alongside working-class gatherings in earlier periods.

### ***Musiqā Wataniya***

Unlike *tarab*, Palestinian music that is given the label *watani* is explicitly tied to commitment to the cause of national liberation, usually by way of its lyrical and thematic content. The term *watani* (*wataniya* in the feminine form) requires disambiguation. *Watan* is sometimes interpreted in English simply as "home," with cultural works in Palestine or among supporters outside sometimes mistranslating a line from Mahmoud Darwish, "*watani laysa haqiba*," as "my home is not a suitcase."<sup>23</sup> *Watan* in the Palestinian context more clearly connotes *watani* land and country, with nation, homeland, or motherland more appropriate equivalents—Palestinian Student Karmel Group translate their intifada-era musical recording as "my homeland is not a suitcase."<sup>24</sup>

In nationalist poetic imagery, *al-watan* is often included alongside *al-balad*, referencing country, land, or local area.<sup>25</sup> Musicians, cultural projects, political groups, and even businesses stake their claim to represent Palestine by adopting this language and naming, for example, the band Baladna (in Jordan and Lebanon), the political party Abna' al-Balad, and the clothing brand Watan. Music of the homeland or nation could be termed "patriotic" but, following the Marxist conceptualization of the progressive or revolutionary nationalism of oppressed nations formulated by Lenin and Roy, and applied to Palestine by Kanafani,<sup>26</sup> a definition of *musiqā wataniya* as "nationalist music" has its own logic, especially considering Rawan, Reem, and Said's classification of *thawri*, "revolutionary" music, as more or less the same type as *watani* genres in their performing experience in Gaza.

Rawan lays particular importance on “revolutionary songs from the [first] intifada,” while referencing strategies of *sumud* learned through the singing of nationalist songs. Similarly, Reem performed Walid Toufic’s “‘Ala sawt al-hajar” (On the sound of the stones) on keyboard at a concert when she was ten years old, remembering that it was “a new song for the al-Aqsa intifada.” Like the music learned by Umm Ali (chapter 3) or the Lebanese *shabab* (chapter 2), *watani* or *thawri* music of this type is composed on simple repeated patterns based around *maqam* fragments and driving rhythms. It is traditionally backed by the *oud*, and the centrality of the committed message means that musical interpretations are arguably more freely formed.<sup>27</sup>

There are international dimensions to this question, with nationalist song forming a vehicle for more direct solidarity with the Palestinian cause or, to borrow Aouragh’s phrase, in the “long distance nationalism” of refugees further away from Palestine;<sup>28</sup> as musicians have left Gaza, keeping elements of this material as part of musical setlists helps to maintain credibility and combat depoliticization, as shown, for example, in the output of Sol Band. Mobilized in Gaza as part of national commemorations, protest, or as part of a program of *turathi*, heritage-celebratory performances, *watani* or *thawri* music contributes to the resistance of Palestine’s region of most acute struggle.

### *Musiqā Turathiya*

Due to its vast musical application and interpretation, the term *turath* is conversely more easily defined as “heritage,” and sits most uneasily as a homogeneous genre. Though melodies and traditional forms such as ‘*ataba*, *dal’una*, or *mijana*<sup>29</sup> have equivalents in the wider Bilad al-Sham region, in the Palestinian reality, there are no clear dividing lines from *watani* music in either *maqam* content or poetic themes, with land and nature recurring themes.<sup>30</sup> As related by the three musicians here, however, the repertoire seen as *musiqā turathiya* contains fewer openly political statements or slogans than *musiqā wataniya* and, being subtly different than the “genres” above in the Palestinian context, is connected to ideas of preservation, even if innovations are added. There are links here with Khali-li’s categorization of *sumud* narratives of commemoration, although *turathi* musical presentations are more likely to be associated with Palestinian

wedding song or the steadfastness of women than remembering heroic battles or victories.<sup>31</sup>

Songs referenced by the musicians from Gaza include the widely known “Wein ‘a-Ramallah,” “Sitti ‘andha thob wa-shal” (My grandma has a dress and shawl), “Ya zarif al-tul” (Oh tall handsome one), “‘Al-rozana” (to the Rosanna, reportedly the name of a ship), and “Falastin, ya immi ya ruhi” (Palestine, my mother, my soul). Songs in this repertoire are performed and recorded in differing stylistic interpretations, usually retaining the basic features of *maqam* and rhythm. Contrasting examples are found in El-Funoun and Shafiq Kabha, with the former based around a traditionalized band of *shabbabeh*, *oud*, *buzuq*, *qanun*, percussion, and chorus, and Kabha pioneering electro-*dabke* versions with *org*, drum machine, and electric guitar. Reem and Rawan have taken the traditional route, though both have also performed in “modern” contexts. Said and Sol Band have more recently favored pop interpretations of *turathi* songs, analyzed in more detail below.

The concept of *turath* as cultural-national heritage witnesses widespread application and contestation across and beyond the Arab world, bound with visions of what represents the “true” heritage of the country.<sup>32</sup> Modernizing processes and official adoption of heritage-based musics in different contexts often leave behind oral methods of learning and adopt formalized instruction, flattening out microtonal subtleties.<sup>33</sup> In fields within and beyond music, the neoliberal policies of the Ramallah-based PA evoke Palestinian heritage, while asserting the right of the comprador bourgeoisie to its exclusive use.<sup>34</sup> Opposing this process, revolutionary nationalism is itself seen as an important element of *turath*, particularly by leftists and those rejecting Oslo. In Gaza, the musical repertoire described here is wielded largely by the masses, with some crossover with commercial TV ventures or NGO-led cultural projects.

As alluded to above, there is significant overlap among the three repertoires discussed, and the subject matter and poetic imagery of these forms is often shared. Instrumental music connecting to a wider Arab tradition, labeled by the three musicians as *musiqa tarabiya*, arguably becomes something else in the Palestinian context, and is sometimes played alongside *watani* and *turathi* musics, with *tarab* coming to form part of the national heritage in the process.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, many classic examples of protest song feature *mawwal* introductions or *taqasim*,<sup>36</sup> suggesting traditions

parallel to those dubbed as *tarab*. In the example of Reem's *taqasim* at the Sol Band concert, typical *tarab* responses from the audience appear embedded in social language.

Similarly, Said's description of Sol Band's more recent pop trajectory does not mean leaving orally learned instrumental prowess behind. An early 2021 video showed Said taking part in a *jalsa* on *oud* with Fares Anbar (*riqq*) and Mohammed Hassan (*qanun*), playing an intricate arrangement of the Fairuz song "Ana li-habibi." Based on fieldwork with Reem, Rawan, and Said, the sections below examine three experiences and narratives of post-Oslo aesthetics, space, and political mediations of colonized Palestine, leading into foci of analysis on Gaza's insurgent creativity and on issues of conservatism and space.

### Reem Anbar: "Gaza's First Female *Oud* Player"

People will begin to understand Palestine through my music—I play our heritage, our songs, Arab music, and it shows I'm from Palestine. Even with my clothing, I try to wear something Palestinian so they will know our culture. This is a message to the whole world. It's also a message to Palestinians. Some people refuse to let girls play or participate, but things have begun to change, little by little. . . . There are some in our country that can't accept Palestinian women playing, but I'll carry on. They will accept it one day.

As the last embers of the first intifada were extinguished in the early 1990s, Reem Anbar's close family were outside of Palestine; her father worked as a mechanic. They lived in relative comfort in Jeddah, where Reem was born, before spending two years living in "a posh house" in Gaddafi-era Libya, which felt for Reem as a young child "like a paradise." Missing home and full of hope, they returned to Gaza in 1995. Abu Rasheed worked in *al-dakhil*, but things changed dramatically as the Sharon government cracked down on the second intifada, closing border crossings and implementing a total blockade with the 2006 election of Hamas. Food, electricity, and health care were hit by crises and, like other previously middle-class families, the Anbar household struggled to get by. Many in the family became refugees for a second time, and Reem eventually moved to Britain in 2017.

Reem was the first musician in her family but grew up around music on the radio, cassettes, and television. Graduating from keyboard to *oud* at the age of eleven, she became known as the “first female *oud* player in Gaza,”<sup>37</sup> and found fame in an active local music scene. Cited as an inspiration by other young musicians in Gaza, Reem was a few years older than her brother Fares and others who came to perform in the area, and the tenacity she describes in learning her instrument extends to a narrative of broader social issues. A recurring theme of our interviews was her view of the failures of Oslo for youth provision, and her criticism of the privileged basis of conservatoire education. Highlighting the paradoxical opportunities of neighborhood-based *tarab* performance and listening, and the limits of official space in Gaza, Reem is seen here as a protagonist for Palestinian national culture and heritage, committed to preserving and questioning contemporary developments in a time of crisis and dispersal of young people in Gaza.

Having been questioned on what attracted her to the *oud* “many times before,” Reem explains that she had seen the instrument on TV and noticed “that it always seemed to be played by old men. Occasionally you’d see *shabab*, but never women. I wanted to know why.” This narrative is revealing of the extent to which Palestinian regions, populations, and exile groups had been partitioned off from each other. Reem had not heard of women *oud* players from outside Gaza, such as Kamilya Jubran, for example, but she met Huda Asfour later on. She remembers seeing the *oud* for the first time:

I played keyboard in concert at a big theater in Gaza and I saw an old guy playing *oud*—I couldn’t stop staring at the instrument—I felt it was something really rare, something really not present in my life, like a dream. Until this point, I hadn’t thought about the *oud*. After that I thought about learning it but I thought it was an impossible dream. How, in Gaza?

Asking anyone who would listen, Reem heard that the instrument would be difficult to pick up, and says she was actually encouraged (“*shajja’ni*”) by the fact that no other girls played. She made it clear during our discussions that it was a conscious choice to challenge gender

expectations, and her stories suggest that she would not take no for an answer. She had attended music courses in different refugee camps but they'd become expensive and an *oud* teacher was hard to find. Reem recalls her uncle introducing her to friends working at the Norwegian-funded Holst Centre in Hay al-Daraj:

I went that day and they did me a little test on the keyboard, said I was talented and that I played well. "OK, we'll teach her *oud*." I couldn't pay but they decided they'd teach me for free. They told me to come back another day to begin the lessons but I said, "No! I want to start today!" I already knew how to hold the *oud* and the *risha* (plectrum). After they'd told me to play one string over and over for five minutes I got bored and asked if I could learn the scale—I thought it was just C to C and *khalas!* 'Ajam.<sup>38</sup> It turned out there were many *maqamat* and other things. I insisted they teach me the notes on the first lesson. In about 5–10 minutes I'd learned "Yama mweil il-hawa." They were staring at me in surprise, talking among themselves. They turned to me and said, "Is this really your first time playing *oud*? Impossible!"

There are continuities here with Umm Ali's inquisitive desire to hear young Palestinian music in the late 1980s (chapter 3), which express a dynamic relationship between generations in Gaza. Insisting on "today and not tomorrow" also elicits demands made in the music of Fairuz. Having seen older players on television, Reem realized that she needed to recruit Palestinian *asatiza* (respected teachers) to help her. These included:

Mahmoud Abu Samra, who was actually my first teacher, for a few months. He's not well known but a great player. Then Hassan Kharoub taught me for free because I didn't have any money. He'd come to the house as he didn't live far away. Ibrahim al-Najjar, one of Gaza's oldest and best-known players loaned me an *oud*. . . . But some of the best local players didn't give regular tuition or have places to teach. Ziad Qasabughli was the best but he'd mostly play at late night restaurants or wedding gigs and I didn't see much of him. He has a really old style, which I kinda prefer, like Qasabgi, without a lot of modern technique but very dignified.



Laughing when I asked for recordings or online links, Reem explained that these were working musicians of an older generation, who did not read music and, like her father, often did not own cellphones. These words were spoken in reverence, admiring their “simple” styles, and Reem said she felt put off by modern players who played the *oud* like it was a guitar.<sup>39</sup>

Reem remembers learning quickly with oral methods. Under the informal teaching of this group of players, she rifled through nationalist and regional folk melodies: “Wein ‘a-Ramallah,” “Yama mweil il-hawa,” “Ya zarif al-tul,” “Biktub ismik ya biladi,” “Fug al-nakhal,” Fairuz’s “Nassam ‘alayna al-hawa,” and “al-Hilwa di” by Sayyid Darwish. Gaza’s closeness to Egypt is expressed musically in some ways distinct to the experiences of Palestinians in Bilad al-Sham. In her relationships with teachers, Reem “demanded more of their time because I wanted to learn more difficult pieces,” and she learned long Umm Kulthum and Abdel Halim Hafiz songs “straight away.” She shared her parents’ taste for “old music,” recalled through memories of *argileh* smoke and strong coffee by the radio, and indicates that the *asatiza* followed similar trends: “In Gaza they’d mostly be playing songs by Umm Kulthum, Farid al-Atrash, maybe Fairuz, Marcel Khalife, along with a big repertoire of revolutionary and *watani* songs.” It is noteworthy that this repertoire remains part of her playing.

Securing free tuition and borrowed instruments were both crucial to Reem’s early learning. Although she found *asatiza* to assist her, she remained primarily self-taught, learning by ear from recordings; lessons were fleeting and were often more opportunities to correct or get advice on techniques she had taught herself. In one sense, Reem was unlucky not to have the presence of an *oud*-playing family member for more intensive study:

The first young *oud* players we had [in the 2000s] were Mohammad and Abdisalam Okasha—who now play in Tunisia, and Said al-Asmar.<sup>40</sup> . . . These guys were taught at home [by their fathers]. There were no music schools back then.

Reem played alongside the *shabab* in early concerts and jam sessions but craved more in-depth study that she did not find in Gaza. Her critique of the post-Oslo world of foreign-funded institutional learning exposes the class contradictions of refugee musicianship in Palestine and the

consequences of widespread proletarianization. The Gaza City branch of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music (ESNCM) was set up in 2012 but Reem found it off-limits:

When [the] Edward Said School opened I'd already reached the maximum age for admission. Plus, to be honest, Edward Said is really expensive and far from where I lived. They mostly teach students from wealthy families. The *shabab* who learn there are mostly rich Christians.

I visited one day and saw how they turned away a mother and her son who couldn't afford the 100 shekels it costs just to apply—it's non-refundable and they just told her, "if he doesn't pass the audition, it's because he has no musical talent."

They asked me to come and teach *oud* for a year as a volunteer—for free! I refused.

Concerns over the conservatory format adopted in Arab countries are raised by Racy, who sees the European model of formalizing tuition as limiting, particularly of direct contact between teacher and student,<sup>41</sup> echoed in the criticisms of Khaled Jubran. Ahmad Al Khatib worked for the ESNCM for eighteen years and saw a primary focus on Western classical music as problematic; he also cited a drain of Arab teachers and reliance on Europeans from the early 2000s.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, as detailed by Beckles Willson, ESNCM funding came via politicized philanthropist "development" and "democracy"-promoting funders like the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), whose reports showed the extremely narrow reach of scholarships, "dealing directly with a small group of the population that is clearly quite separate from the poorer and less privileged minority."<sup>43</sup> Reem adds that the vast majority of musicians in Gaza learn outside the institution. She did not, however, see a disproportionate focus on Western music in the example of Gaza, perhaps hinting at increased difficulties in bringing foreign instructors to the blockaded enclave compared to the West Bank; that still could not, however, justify the invitation to Reem to carry out unpaid labor for the conservatory.

Like other young Palestinians, Reem also attended dance, drama, and music activities at the Said al-Mashal theater, the Holst Centre, and other small associations. As a young woman Reem had used her skills in music

and music therapy to find employment with NGOs and charities as a means to contribute financially at home. Becoming active in music during the second intifada meant that

when I started playing, there were concerts of revolutionary, nationalist, and traditional music. I was a child at the time and participated in these activities. . . . There was a lot of fear among the children as the Zionists were in Gaza, there could be kidnappings, house invasions at any time. We'd hear songs like [Ahmad Kaabour's] "Unadikum"—it was the anthem of our childhood! As soon as we heard it on TV, we knew a war was coming. I played "Biktub ismik ya biladi," "Ala sawt al-hajar," "Wein al-malayin." . . . We learned to play "Shiddu al-himma" by Marcel Khalife for the Rashad al-Shawwa [center], where there were many concerts. I played songs there for the intifada with a group of young musicians. After the outbreak of the intifada we played constantly, commemorating martyrs. Mohammed al-Durra was just one. Iman Hajju was another; a bomb blew her body apart.

In 2014, Reem recorded a solo *oud taqasim* during the Israeli bombing of the Gaza Strip, prompting activists in Palestine and Europe to share the video online as an example of Palestinians' ability to overcome war and oppression. She explains that she used the instrument "to speak," to "write a message" through music: "I'm Palestine and I exist [*mawjuda*] through my music. Israel can't say that Palestine doesn't exist. Of course, this is *sumud*." During the uprising, musicians were recruited to perform across Gaza. She reflects:

For me, *wataniya* means talking about a national revolution, the wars and the circumstances of the nation. Politics is politics—wars, bombings, the darkness between the parties. *Turathiya* means the land, olives, food, weddings, the seaside, new babies. The style of music is often the same but the subject changes, although there is maybe more authenticity in *turathi* songs.

Explaining that she felt a duty to contribute, Reem led music therapy sessions for families whose homes had been bombed in successive invasions and drew on *turathi* and *watani* song types. Frustrated by

interpretations of Palestinian music as “sad” (*hazin*), Reem emphasizes that young people felt a sense of happiness or celebration when singing about the natural scenery of historic Palestine, along with traditions such as *tatriz* (embroidery) or weddings, and concludes that “maybe Palestinian music is actually all about love, but of a different kind—love of the nation [*watan*], love of the land.” Feldman links similar ideas in the Gaza context to “memory through refrain,” as a way of surviving Israeli attempts at erasure,<sup>44</sup> with imagery such as olives, traditional dress, and weddings an enduring feature of *sumud* narratives.

During this period of public performance, Reem held many informal *jalsat* at home and in the open air. In photographer Laura Boushnak’s published selection of 2016 shots of women in Gaza, Reem is pictured sitting on the beach under a gazebo, with men, women, and children listeners looking on.<sup>45</sup> The wind is blowing visibly at sheets and headscarves but Reem is a picture of stillness. She also remembers being worried that her playing in the family apartment would annoy the neighbors. As it turned out, they had been bringing chairs to their doorsteps and listening under the moonlight. There would be instrumental pieces thrown in the mix of other songs Reem played publicly. Her older brother Rasheed would request to hear “Sama’i bayati al-’Iryan”—“he just loved that melody.” Reem liked that others shared her preference for earlier material, “the older the better, even before Umm Kulthum.” So doing, Reem challenged both the earlier limits of youth, when she had not been able to attend late night performances by Qasabughli, and the tastes of some of her girlfriends, who listened only to modern pop music.

In the chronicle of her musical journey so far, with commitments to Palestinian and regional music heritage, a firm sense of national identity, and a tendency to critique, it is clear that Reem has carried her sociomusical values into adult life. Continuing to perform live, however, she found that social pressures to stop performing in mixed-gender bands intensified after her teenage years; she reported that Hamas supporters put a stop to her concerts, though she still had work in music teaching and therapy in Gaza, and continued the neighborhood *jalsat*. It is important to note, however, that Reem paints a separation between the barriers to perform and the intifada environment in which she learned to play. In Reem’s case, the *takht* ensemble serving as a *maqam* training ground<sup>46</sup> was represented by wider collective experience, encompassing oral learning by older players,

national heritage-based performances on Gaza stages, and informal *jalsat* with family, friends, and other musicians. Gaza was also a training ground for a class-conscious view of musical opportunity. Though primarily relying on nonverbal messages in her music, Reem's sense of commitment challenged the roadblocks of Palestinian youth.

### Rawan Okasha: "Singing Is in My Blood"

I was surrounded by music as a child, as though our house was a place of musical and artistic training. The first sound I remember hearing came from my father's *oud*, beginning my love for music. Later, as I got a little bigger, teachers noticed that I had a talent for singing and put me at the center of school radio broadcasts, national celebrations, and school events. And of course, singing at family events helped to build my talents at the same time.

*Tarab* is beneficial to our country. Perhaps I believe this because of the preferences of my family. Reem [Anbar] and I were both raised in an atmosphere where *tarab* was everything. It's important because it returns us to times past, reminding us of what music was like for our grandparents. It also teaches us the basic origins of our art.

One of thirteen siblings, the majority performers, Rawan Okasha was born into a well-known working-class family in Gaza City. In her childhood, their father Atif was a gigging musician in the local area and her mother an enthusiast for Palestinian folk arts. Following in Atif's footsteps, elder brothers Mohammad, Rami, and Abdisalam worked the cafés, restaurants, and took particular pride in performing on the streets; all currently work as musicians. Sister Raneen sang for a period in Egypt, and after years of singing locally, she performed in slickly produced pop videos, including the 2005 hit "Habib qalbi." Rawan is younger than her illustrious siblings, and her musical journey is understated and localized, though both she and Raneen have been subject to media speculation on their exits from the public stage. Despite Rawan's role in the Dawaween band in 2015–16, she is primarily a home performer, like most Palestinian women singers. This section charts her band experience and representations of music heritage.

If Reem's musical origins came initially through a familial love of listening, Rawan learned her musicianship through household singing, instrumentalism, and oral teaching. Remembering that much of her early repertoire arrived via Atif Okasha's *oud* playing, which "sparked our love of the arts," she focused on older material:

Of course, the songs that I was brought up on included Fairuz, Umm Kulthum, Abdel Wahab, and all of the old greats, not to mention our important traditional and revolutionary songs. This whole mix shaped my artistic personality. The first Umm Kulthum song I heard was "Lissa fakir." My father would play it on *oud* and I'd copy the singing. I learned nearly all of her songs but "Lissa fakir" was the first.

Among some families admiring this tradition, the often quite "heavy" material of Umm Kulthum is embedded from an early age, more often by happenstance listening and singing along.<sup>47</sup> Rawan describes a phenomenon of planned learning, using older methods of oral tuition. Like Umm Kulthum herself,<sup>48</sup> Atif Okasha was unfettered to notation, further suggesting an "oral-written divide"<sup>49</sup> between grassroots traditions and conservatoire education. In her politically conscious household, Rawan recalls being exposed to a more or less even blend of *turathi* and revolutionary nationalist material, sung alongside *tarab* repertory in large *jalsat* in the neighborhood.

Comprising fifteen members, the Dawaween band came together during informally organized gatherings in late 2015. Forming a focal part of the *jalsat* in which the material was sung, Rawan took the step of returning to public performance; she had sung at concerts and on television as a teenager but had settled down with a family in the intervening years. Through a carefully planned blend of resistance songs and *turath*, Rawan applied her musicianship to voicing revolutionary nationalism, bringing iconography of steadfast womanhood to the stage. Coming to a high point at a March 10, 2016, return concert in the iconic Said al-Mashal theater, Dawaween met with an ecstatic audience response and widespread media attention. It was, however, to be their last concert, with opposition from conservatives apparently the cause. We return to this theme following analysis of the musical representations offered by Rawan and Dawaween,

performed in a context of grassroots discontent and impasse of the liberation movement. Rawan's narrative, with the rise and fall of her musical project, symbolizes a further critique of the conditions faced by Palestinian refugee youth in Gaza.

In early January 2016, Dawaween band members were filmed playing together in a garden setting in Gaza, sitting with unamplified instruments and performing "Ya yamma fi dagga 'a-babna" (Oh mother, there is a knock at our door), a revolutionary song recorded by Abu Arab, and "Hal asmar al-lawn," a folkloric piece widely sung across the region. Signaling the working-class makeup of the band—and Gaza's economic woes—the instruments appear worn, and the *oud* had missing strings. There were short *oud* and violin *taqasim* prefacing the songs, a common link with *tarab* tradition. Speaking to news cameras, they reflect on responses to their first concert at the Said al-Mashal a few weeks prior. Rawan smiles as she talks about the idea behind the band and conveys the excitement of the audience reaction:

We got together, *shabab* and musicians, played together and began to talk about songs. We all agreed that it was important to revive songs from the Palestinian heritage and were all committed to the idea, but we wanted to play the songs in our own way. We quickly organized our first concert and you saw how people responded, *al-hamdillah!* People reacted after the concert or got in touch on social media and asked, "Where were you?!" We were blessed [*Allah waffa'na*].

Video and audience evidence of the December concert showed the buzz around the band, and the group was inundated during its period of activity, performing at charity events, and in front of regional cameras. Smiling as she brushed off the "few negative comments" received on the band's gender mixing, Rawan insisted that "we will continue to sidestep these people and convince them that we're doing something new, while respecting our traditions." Their final concert was a culmination of developments in and out of the band, displaying the fine tuning of months working, rehearsing, and shaping a collective repertoire, building considerable audience excitement, and a coming to a head of outside negativity. This did not, however, affect the running of the concert itself, which was oversubscribed, with dozens listening from outside. Witnesses told of the

energy in the room<sup>50</sup> and attendees spoke to the media about the importance of Palestinian musical heritage. At the center of the excitement, Rawan “felt a great freedom and release as I heard my voice alongside the players I have gotten to know through the band.” Onstage she exuded calm but, as she reported in during our interviews, she felt the weight of the event:

I can't describe how I felt. More than wonderful. A feeling I had dreamed about for a long time. My emotions were all mixed up, excitement and nerves at the same time.

In the theater, members of the band were noticeably dressed up compared to their garden *jalsa*, with fellow vocalist Raouf Belbeisi wearing a bowtie under his maroon suit jacket and sporting an electroacoustic *oud*, while others wore pressed shirts and jeans. Joining for the occasion, acclaimed teenage *qanun* player Mahmoud Kahil sat just behind Rawan. Standing out among the *shabab* and black and white calligraphed backdrop, Rawan wore a white *thob* with red *fellahi* embroidery. At the time of the concert, she was pregnant with her second child. An unsegregated crowd of adults and children clapped and sang along enthusiastically, took photos, and voiced approving exclamations.

Among the songs performed at the March 10 concert, “Hiz al-rimh” (The spear shook) is indicative of the double meanings, historic references, and multiple contexts of Palestinian folk tradition since the Nakba and has origins in rural orality. Versions were played over the years by nationalist bands such as Firqat Bissan and al-Ashiqeen, often with newly composed lyrics referencing the contemporary language of Palestinian liberation.<sup>51</sup> As both a wedding song and an anthem of Palestinian revolution, its content on stage is imbued with particular meaning in the Gaza context, and even more so in the hands of Rawan and a band of working-class musicians. At the Mashal theater, she and Raouf sang a selection of its standard verses:<sup>52</sup>

[Raouf]	The spear shook, oh goodly branch
[Rawan]	And where are our brave knights?
[Raouf]	We are your youth, Palestine
[Rawan]	You bless us doubly with your presence



The day of the battle of Beit Imrin  
 The voices of volcanoes erupted  
 We walked from Jenin  
 Until we arrived at Wadi Tuffah

The news spread in Jabal al-Nar (Nablus)  
 Young and old attacked  
 Never was there a stronger battle  
 It came to resemble Hittin

We crossed the river safely  
 While the usurper watched on  
 Write this, oh history:  
 The oppression and deception of the Westerners.

The first line of the song begins its standard refrain<sup>53</sup> with a twofold meaning that complicates translation. While clearly set alongside imagery of anticolonial rebellion, its lyrics hint at its use as a wedding song, with particular *fellahi* overtones, where the spear (*rimh*) also indexes the *ghusn al-zaytun*, or olive branch, and the words *oud al-zein* (literally, pure or goodly wood) describe the groom. Adding to this symbolism, Rawan's *thob* brought associations with traditional weddings, where lines of *dabke*-dancing "knights" typically form the chorus of *zajal* wedding poetry. "*We-na'am we-na'mitein*," denoting double blessings, is a time-honored greeting to someone coming from an esteemed family.

The second and third stanzas in Dawaween's performance relate the heroism of marching Palestinian resistance, acclaiming the strength of fighting spirit at Beit Imrin, a village besieged by British forces in September 1936. From the same era, "walking from Jenin" references both the guerrilla struggle against imperialism and the fleeing of Palestinian families with the British policy of burning down houses of suspected rebels; today's refugee camp at Jenin in the West Bank is, like Gaza, recognized as a site of spirited anti-Zionist steadfastness.

Following a tradition of mythologizing historic battles in nationalist narratives,<sup>54</sup> Palestinian confrontations with imperialism are compared with the 1187 victory of Salah el-Din's forces against European Crusaders at Hittin. "Crossing the river" charts the expulsion of Palestinians into



13. Rawan Okasha sings with al-Dawaween, March 2016. Public domain.

Jordan in 1948, with many forced onto trucks by armed Zionist forces and literally driven across the border,<sup>55</sup> while the “deception” (*ghadr*) of Westerners evokes British double-dealing prior to the Nakba.<sup>56</sup> Imagery of erupting volcanoes, representing the rising *shabab* in revolutionary struggle against Zionism, had wider musicopoetic use in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>57</sup>

Further inference comes in the male and female alternating of lyrics in a call-and-response conversation between Raouf, as the voice of the *shabab*, and Rawan, playing the Palestinian motherland. Becoming the Dawaween frontwoman, Rawan gave voice to a narrative of resistance with origins in eras of armed struggle and nationalist revival (figure 13). She learned the musical material as a child:

I sang all types of nationalist, revolutionary, and traditional songs, and especially revolutionary songs from the intifada, but also including songs from our heritage, previously sung by our ancestors through all of their joys and sorrows.

Here, Rawan lays claim to a tradition of musical insurgency and unites *watani/thawri* song with a wider heritage. The concert had been billed with the title “Tall slahi” (My weapon rises), a shortening of the song chorus

“Tall slahi min jirahi ya thawra” (I draw my weapon from my wounds, oh revolution),<sup>58</sup> performed at the concert’s climax to rapturous audience participation, though it is usually sung by a male chorus. As argued in chapter 1, refugee women have played a leading role in the transmission of Palestinian narratives.

Rawan lays emphasis on intifada songs, from a time of prominence for the women’s movement. Alongside the steadfast child Handala, Naji al-Ali draws Mother Palestine in rootedness to the earth, handing rocks to children confronting the occupation.<sup>59</sup> Or, in Gaza, wearing a *tatriz* dress and carrying a bundle which bayonets the hand of the Zionist soldier.<sup>60</sup> Standing at the center of Gaza’s *shabab*, a pregnant Rawan adopts the Mother Palestine role in a context of deepening colonial blockade and social convulsion. Verbalizing musical and political heritage in the intifada, Rawan also lays claim to the significance posed by the participation of women in the uprising. If, as Kannaneh writes, women’s bodies are “deeply inscribed as reproducers of the nation,”<sup>61</sup> on the Mashal stage the nation was produced in collective conversation with womanhood. Reproducing the narrative of Palestinian revolution, Rawan employs highly skilled practices of musicianship and stagecraft. While male *nai*, *oud*, and *qanun* players took *taqasim* improvisations, Rawan also provided solo *mawwal* introductions, once seen as the domain of men though reclaimed by women during the intifada.<sup>62</sup> As Meari suggests, “Sumud takes on its real life in the assemblage of multiple singular practices and the reorganization of relationships.”<sup>63</sup>

Amid a raft of reviews published by Arabic agencies following the March 10 concert, the *New York Times* published its own English-language report, an unusual step in itself.<sup>64</sup> Beginning with the false assertion that no woman singer had performed live in Gaza since the year of Hamas’s election,<sup>65</sup> the article put forward a set of scandalizing claims on the constraining influence of Islamists on Rawan and the group’s performance, carrying stereotypes of cultural practices and implying antisemitism in the labeling of Palestinian villages on a map at the concert. Selling “permission to narrate,” to borrow Said’s term, to a newspaper frequently describing Palestinians as “terrorists,”<sup>66</sup> the authors employ subtler orientalist language. Rawan’s stage presence is particularly examined, with the allegation that she was required to “stand still while singing” and “dress

modestly," for there would be Hamas officials in the audience, "watching for anything that might offend."

As shown by Sawa, *tarab* is traditionally exhibited in often subtle bodily movements and facial expression, with concepts of *adab* (or performance etiquette) detailed as far back as the eleventh-century treatises of al-Katib.<sup>67</sup> Often, differences in bodily behavior do not coincide with observance to Islam; Reem Kelani describes Christian vocalist Fairuz's stillness on stage as "like a stone" in comparison to her own stage persona.<sup>68</sup> Rawan also performed more animatedly than Fairuz, channeling Umm Kulthum's one- or two-handed gestures to the crowd or, in emphasis of a particular line of a *qasida*, swaying her body and motioning to those present. Facial expressions are notably employed by *mutribin*<sup>69</sup> in the channeling of emotion through music. During "Hiz al-rimh," Rawan and Raouf turned to each other, smiling during the conversation between Mother Palestine and her *shabab*. Outside of Gaza, known women vocalists, including Dalal Abu Amneh and Sanaa Moussa wear similarly "modest" wedding *thobs*.

Discussing the band's project to bring "lost" Palestinian traditions to young people, Rawan's father, as musical coach to the band following his retirement, spoke of modernizing and angling the songs toward youth in Gaza. Atif Okasha highlights Dawaween's mission to "present committed art that serves the Palestinian cause. Our audience is educated, aware and supportive of talent, as we saw in the celebration of the first concert." This commentary predates the *New York Times* writers' assertion that the Rawan's singing of patriotic music came at the behest of the Hamas ministry, and their description of the group's "limping through an old Palestinian song" in rehearsal.<sup>70</sup> It may be, of course, that the selection of songs was aimed at satisfying a cross-section of society, but there is a further contradiction in the writers' argument, where they assert that Hamas's "version of musical entertainment is mostly barbershop-quartet-style [*sic*] groups composed of bearded men or modestly dressed little girls." The material chosen by Dawaween is intriguing, as the lyrics of "Hiz al-rimh," "Hayyid 'an al-jayshi" (Lay low from the army), and other songs contain a richness of folkloric vocabulary no longer in regular use. However, an apparent mission to modernize may point to their place alongside "Wein al-malayin," "Ya zarif al-tul," and other well-known pieces. Indeed, Rawan and Atif's suggestion of a "new style" raises questions, with performances

showing firm commitment to existing *tarab* and *turathi* soundworlds and with *oud* and *qanun* given particular presence in this example. It is my suggestion here that musical performances of *al-watan* are indivisible in this context from high-art Arab musical traditions appropriated by this group of *sha'bi* refugee musicians in Gaza. The band name Dawaween (plural of *diwan*) is misinterpreted as “idle chatter” in the *New York Times*, while Rawan saw its real invocation of a “return to the gatherings of poets, artists, and musicians in the diwan.” Far from being a top-down imposition of official nationalism, as shown so far in the chapter, the revolutionary connotations of young musicianship are embedded in grassroots practices, including vocal support for armed resistance. Like the intifada itself, the musicality of Gaza youth emerged and was sustained by the Palestinian street.

Speaking four years after the events of 2016, Rawan appeared relaxed about the decision of the authorities to prevent her singing with the band, though she wished she could return to the stage.

They wouldn't give permission for the band to play if I appeared with them. Hopefully things will change. I sing to my children, of course, and whenever there is a family gathering, I take the opportunity to sing. Singing is in my blood.

It is fairly indicative of the times that the ecstatic response of the *jumhur* (audience) is met with simultaneous unease at message of national unity voiced by a young woman. In Gaza, the forces that have led past decades' resistance are in a state of impasse. Rawan is philosophical: “*Watani* songs teach us patience.” By October 2022, she had returned to public performing in Gaza.<sup>71</sup>

### Said Fadel: “We Wanted to Flip This Idea of Success and Failure”

The first song I played in my life was “Dhahab al-layl wa tala' al-fagr” [“The night has gone and out comes the sun”; a children's song] and, from the *watani* songs, “Wein 'a-Ramallah.” From Fairuz, I learned “*li ajliki ya madinat al-salah . . .*” [the opening lyrics to “Zahrat al-mada'in”]. My father would sit with me and teach me by ear and I'd memorize the songs orally, not by some academic route. It was all about listening and internalizing it.

Palestinian music is not just sadness and loss, the opposite is true. Palestinian and *sharqi* music, in general, are built around the most beautiful melodies and songs of many types and, even if we sing around sadness, we are the people who can convey these feelings more than anyone else. It is the same idea if we sing romantically or religiously or nationalistically, or in songs of celebration, or *tarab* songs [*aghani tarabiya*].

Composer, *oud* player, and performer Salam Srour came from the same generation as Atif Okasha, performing to earn a wage from early on and teaching a mix of Arab repertoires. Before the Nakba, his own grandfather Sha'ban had boasted the title of the first guitarist in Yafa, one instrument among many picked up later by Salam's son, Said Salam Fadel. Growing up in the Shari' al-'Abbas, between Shati' refugee camp and Gaza's historically prosperous port district of al-Rimal, Said was surrounded from a young age by family musicians engaged in regular gatherings, exposed to *turathi* musics, along with the classic *tarab* songworks of the twentieth century. His education would take place in informal and systematic ways through his father's coaching, and he'd come to sing and play *oud*, guitar, and keyboard, leading bands with school friends. "We wouldn't sit and talk about football like other teenagers," he remembers. "We'd talk music and bring instruments."

In one sense the story of Sol Band could be told from the position of any of its core members, yet Said's familial history and social experience is arguably more revealing of the roots of oral music tradition in Gaza and of the ways in which art musics and nationally referential modes of performance are appropriated at the grassroots. The band journey is expressive of a coming together of orally based genres and community-learned skills as paths to new modalities of expression and *maqam* interpretation. The group exhibits the tendency of generations of neighborhood musicians to lay claim to public space, asserting a right to use streets, beaches, and cafés as open-air venues for nationally referential musicality. From their insistence on keeping the group together, and performing with *sa-baya* (young women), despite societal objections, their creative processes are fundamentally collective, rather than individual, revealing a communal critique of Gaza's position in colonial underdevelopment.

Said's words on internalizing music rather than reading it under formal instruction reveal his father's approach, based on the industrial

practice of being a musician; neighborhood gatherings also counted as training. Like the Okasha sons, Said followed his father into informal economies of musicianship, including later in Istanbul. But before the days of work and artistic decisions, Said's childhood home doubled as a music school:

My mother, siblings, and grandparents too, we'd sit together every Thursday and learn *tarab* songs together, Umm Kulthum, Abdel Wahab, like a family gathering, and then we'd start playing. Everyone would encourage each other—there was no “don't play this,” or “play quietly”; no!

Reem reports that she and Said later attended a Swedish-funded teacher training day and were asked by the workshop leader to write down their all-time favorite song and place it in an envelope. Upon opening, they revealed they had both written “Is'al ruhak” (Ask your soul), a Mohamed El Mougy composition performed by Umm Kulthum in 1969, with a prominent *oud* introduction. Around eight years old, Said joined the family *jalsat* as an *oud* and keyboard player, also joining in in the singing. His detailing of the routine nature of the *jalsa* reveals that, although there were elements of spontaneity at the heart of the music, having a weekly event required organization and planning.

This conscious process extended to the material played. Including Fairuz's anthems for a liberated Jerusalem, the playlists embedded *watani* links, while the “songs of my parents and their parents' generations” included *turathi* folksongs “Dal'una,” “Jafra,” “Wein 'a-Ramallah,” alongside revolutionary songs from al-Ashiqeen and Julia Boutros. Said offers the impression of a familial open-mindedness, also recalling visits to his aunt's house, where cousins recorded rap music.

From this early foundation, Said's teenage years were marked by a growing brotherhood with other young musicians, involving both musical exploration and a socioeconomic codependence. Core members of Sol Band came to include Hamada Nasrallah and Ahmed Haddad, both singer-guitarists, and percussionist Fares Anbar. As they lived through power cuts and food shortages, finding few opportunities outside of school, and little work as young adults, their bonds developed into a sense of kinship:

The *shabab* came to rely on each other, live in each other's houses in Gaza, sharing food, money, and playing music together all the time. We'd see each other more than we'd see our families. . . . In the band, some of our routes into learning music were different from person to person but the thing that united us was that things would be easier together. The harmony is in our culture. We needed to think about how to live. We came from the same school, same streets, same environment. It's hard to find friends like that. Even from a music business perspective, it's hard to go it alone, and better to be part of something collective.

I see this overlap of shared values, social solidarity, and drive to create in adverse circumstances as related to other underground and DIY cultures,<sup>72</sup> and the *shabab* remaining in the band have continued to support each other financially through uncertain times.<sup>73</sup> Sol Band would be joined at various points by Reem Anbar (*oud* and *buzuq*), Sum'a Abu 'Ali (*nai*), Sasha Abu Sha'ban (accordion), Mohammad Shoman (bass guitar), and female vocalist Rahaf Shamali, who has remained a member. Though bringing together a range of influences and learning processes, from Haddad's self-taught jazz to Rahaf's experience as a child member of the Edward Said Choir, Said insists that "we were not too interested in what we played," and the important thing was "just to have something that people could come and listen to."

Through this collective experience, I argue that the musical framing of the Sol Band experience carries key signifiers of youth consciousness in Gaza, including relationships to revolutionary nationalism, conservatism, and to traditions in *maqam* performance. My analysis here concerns a collection of thirty rearranged *turathi* songs recorded in Gaza in summer 2019 for the online Falastini TV. Entitled "Wasla," meaning a suite of musical pieces in Arab *maqam* tradition, the Sol series featured high-end studio recordings in a style labeled *shababi* (youth-like) by Said, ranging from Spanish guitar-driven pop renditions to band backing of traditionalized *nai* and vocal arrangements. Said played keyboard on most of the tracks, including electro-*dabke* synth stylings and straightforward chordal accompaniment, also singing backing vocals, and playing *oud* on versions of "Al-ouf mash'al" (based on the "ouf" exclamation found in folk vocalizing) and "Sammuni laji" (They call me refugee) by Ahmad Kaabour. All of



the songs were from Palestinian and regional folk and *watani* repertoires, and included the revolutionary songs “Habbit al-nar” (The spark of gun-fire) recorded by al-Ashiqeen, “Ya falastiniya” by Sheikh Imam, and “Wein al-malayin,” sung by Julia Boutros. Said explains:

The idea was to show that nationalist song is still alive with the new generation. The problem was that many young people would not listen to the old recordings; maybe they were poor quality, the sound of the *oud* was really quiet and they had issues accepting it. We decided to modernize the songs, work on the rhythm, and play them with a new kind of energy: “Yalla, play it in the car!” We’re the 2000s generation but these are songs from my father or grandfather’s generation.

Some of the songs celebrated the beauty of Palestine (“al-Hilwa Gaza”—Gaza, the beautiful), presenting images of Gaza’s scenery alongside up-tempo music sung by smiling musicians. This idea of *farah* connects to a broader Sol Band message.

Present in the *turathi* repertoire of Bilad al-Sham, “Al-rozana” reportedly tells the tale of an Italian ship docking in Lebanon during the 1914 famine. The ship, the *Rosanna*, arrived bare, prompting Bandar Khalil to suggest its representation of “an endless range of despair, frustration and helplessness” of the Palestinian people;<sup>74</sup> the *Rosanna* would be barred from docking in present day Gaza due to Israeli gunboats imposing a sea blockade. This story of broken dreams is overturned in the Sol Band imagery and musical arrangement. In a nighttime scene at a *tatriz*-laden open-air café, smiling profusely at the cameras and surrounded by a crowd of revelers and children, Hamada and Rahaf sing the lines:

To the Rosanna, to the Rosanna, everything good is inside her.  
But what has the Rosanna done?  
May God punish her!

Musically, the song has been recorded in numerous versions in *ji-harkah*,<sup>75</sup> an increasingly rare *maqam* containing microtonal notes not playable on equal-tempered instruments such as guitar or keyboard. Performances in this bittersweet *maqam*, featuring a (sometimes<sup>76</sup>) slightly

flattened third note, a quarter-flat fourth, and a half-flat seventh, were performed famously by Syrian *mutrib* Sabah Fakhri and by Fairuz. However, in the Sol Band arrangement, based around acoustic guitar, electric bass, and unison backing vocals, the melody and chordal accompaniment are performed in 'ajam on F, a *maqam* often equated with the Western major scale.<sup>77</sup> In Said's view:

Our music is broad enough to carry different ways of presenting it. . . . But the essentials of the music, its lyrics, beat, or *maqam* are elements of the song that we can't mess with.

Differences of interpretation and regional variation are widespread. Boulos's analysis of performance in 1920–59 shows that the song existed in the *maqamat jiharkah*, *huzam*, and *kurdi*;<sup>78</sup> in southern Lebanon, Bahaa Joumaa learned the song in *nahawand*. Many musicians across the Arab world have come to see *jiharkah* and 'ajam as interchangeable and versions of "Al-rozana" in 'ajam have been recorded by Palestinian vocalist Sanaa Moussa and Syrian-Armenian Lena Chamamyán.

While it would be a mistake to argue that the Sol arrangement is not heavily Westernized in terms of its instrumentation and intonation, this process is far from new. The issue of *maqam* erasure remains a feature of modernizing processes and, in Adileh's view, the *maqam* system is under threat of disappearance in its entirety.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, Allami suggests, the Western keyboard is itself a decidedly nonneutral device linked to colonial domination.<sup>80</sup> This argument echoes the analysis of Palestinian folklorist Abdelatif al-Bargouthi in 1986, who warned that traveling too far along the road of technological modernity could contribute to "third world countries . . . losing our culture."<sup>81</sup>

Other Sol performances, including "Layya wa-layya" and "Dal'una" include some traditional microtones and vocal nuances. What appears as a point of interpretation may indeed carry deeper signifiers of global processes. However, a key theme of this book is the appropriation of "cosmopolitan" tools by Palestinian refugees to serve new ends. Speaking to their generation, Said suggests that musical form was secondary to the energy and collectivity enabled by its performance.

Charting the group's development from its first, 2016 concert, Said was frank:

The situation was terrible, no electricity, no infrastructure. The existence of the occupation, the partition [*inqisam*] of Palestine, all of the upheavals that we lived through, maybe all of this just pushed us to work harder. If there's no electricity—no problem, if there's no concert—no problem. We'd find a solution some other way.

One solution wielded by Sol Band has been to embrace video recording of street and community musicianship, typically featuring the band performing together, enjoying the scenery, and attracting crowds of on-lookers. In the self-filmed “Aluli” (They told me), a catchy, keyboard-driven pop song, the group is seen driving around Gaza in a borrowed open-top car, including Rahaf without *hijab*, past neighborhoods marked by trees and graffiti, and walking on the beach. In front of the high rises of al-Sheikh ‘Ajlin, Hamada sings of Palestine “giving me the power to bear,” of “making me strong,” and confessing his love for “her.” While this may be read as a personal message of overcoming obstacles, or a generic patriotism, I argue that the public, collective message at the heart of the Sol project sets a challenge to individualistic approaches. Stating their loyalty to Palestine, the band includes the song in its playlists alongside more clearly *watani* and *thawri* examples, suggesting the genres’ continued prevalence among youngsters embracing new styles. At the same time, Sol lays claim to public space, celebrating in the face of colonial oppression, proletarianization, and facing down attempts at silencing young women. It was indicative of their approach that Sol musicians were filmed playing instruments on the frontlines of the March of Return in 2018, which hints at an urge to contribute creatively to a reinvigorated national cause. “Flipping” the feelings of despair attributed to “Al-rozana” by Khalil, Said, and Sol assert their right to celebrate *and* to be revolutionary, offering a subtle critique of present conditions.

Sitting in an Istanbul flat, Said introduces “Gulli leish” (Tell me why), a new song they have been working on:

Some questions we could ask about Palestine could be applied to the whole Arab world. About people who take government control but, as soon as they see money and cars, forget to think about how to feed the people. Maybe we're the people who think about these questions the most.

### "Like Fire": Gaza's New Jerusalem for Nationalized Music

Sing! Can we not sing  
as if we were warm, hand-in-hand,  
sheltered by shade from a sweltering sun?

—WALID KHAZINDAR, "DISTANT LIGHT"<sup>82</sup>

Returning to the poetic account of Gaza in this chapter's introduction, the "explosions," "collisions," and "different values" recognized by Darwish require analysis in light of the creative practices detailed above. By other accounts, and referencing similar phenomena, Gaza has long evoked a special energy or political-cultural environment. Its position as an object of solidarity has mobilized millions worldwide and inspires Palestinians across the *ghurba*. In fields of performance, others have built an affinity with Gaza and its audience, partly developed in times when they could visit. Expressing inspiration, al-Ashiqeen released the intifada cassette "Ana min Gazza" (I'm from Gaza), while leading Sabreen member Said Murad described the atmosphere of the band's 1993 Gaza concert approvingly: "it was like fire."<sup>83</sup>

The cases covered in this chapter carry an indication of the musical and social energies of successive generations of Gaza refugees, with young women playing a vocal and often pivotal role in collective expression. Experiencing and taking on a palate of traditional and contemporary sounds reflects the post-Nakba coalescence of peasants and urbanites, working class and relatively privileged, and those with little or more exposure to "global" influences.

Though the form of this regional convergence may be new, Nur Masalha argues that the cosmopolitanism of the region and Gaza's importance as a city dates back millennia, as an urban center of the Early Bronze Age, a Hellenized city of the Byzantine era, and a major center of scholarship under Islam. In Late Antiquity, Gaza's position as "effectively the dominant political and cultural centre of greater Palestine" shaped the country's central identity in absorbing multiple social and cultural traditions.<sup>84</sup> Under Ottoman and British Mandate rule, Gaza served as a gateway to and from Egypt, later becoming a site of counterinsurgency and anti-imperialist confrontation. A major urban center of pre-Nakba Palestine, Gaza was visited by the stars of early twentieth-century *tarab* and film, and absorbed

200,000 refugees after 1948, including many who became politically active, among them poets who turned their pens to songs of resistance.<sup>85</sup> Subject to Egyptian jurisdiction and repression after the Nakba, Gaza became a center of revolutionary rejectionism before Israel's 1967 colonization.<sup>86</sup>

Masalha's arguments on Palestine's earlier forms of cultural absorption are instructive both on the social makeup of post-1948 Gaza and of the socioeconomic phenomena of the post-Oslo crisis. If, as Sirhan suggests, Gaza's linguistic conservatism speaks to its isolation,<sup>87</sup> musical relationships encompassing multiple traditions transmitted and challenged at street level suggest a dialectical process of preserving and revolutionizing. A succession of Zionist blockades since the late 1980s has crystalized loyalty to traditions of nationalist resistance and *turath*, but Gaza is also noted as a place where newer trends such as electro or rap have taken form. Facing overwhelming human catastrophe, economic warfare, and impulsive Israeli wars, underdevelopment and proletarianization have hit Gaza's small middle class. The second intifada was, according to Edward Said, a "popular insurrection against Oslo."<sup>88</sup> In this context, musical aesthetics reference shifting class connotations, pedagogy, and arenas for performance. Navigating their way through the crisis, youth invention and critique go hand in hand in ways not poles apart from Palestinian bands of 1980s Jerusalem.<sup>89</sup> Then, like now, finding a voice meant using the springboard of tradition.

Drawing on the earlier work of Scott Marcus, Beckles Willson emphasizes the distinctions between "learned" *maqam* practices and "oral traditions developed in rural communities."<sup>90</sup> Formal conservatoire methods, such as utilizing sheet music, highlight this difference. However, the experiences of Reem, Said, Rawan, and their circles suggest that "classical" Arab repertoires described by these writers are also oral traditions, with a blurring of lines between *tarab/maqam* traditions and rurally referential *turath* forms; indeed, many in Gaza City come from peasant backgrounds. As noted also in the highly developed early musicianship of Ahmad Al Khatib, the urban environment inhabited by Palestinian refugee youth is characterized by informal transmission, with many examples in this chapter gravitating toward Egypt. These include some Egyptian-composed *sama'iyat* or *basharif* for instrumentalists, but the vocal music of Umm Kulthum appears omnipresent.

There are geographic and historic reasons for Umm Kulthum's endurance in Palestine, yet a yearning to appropriate the "old" and "authentic" (*asil*) is also a key factor in *al-sitt*'s acceptance by new generations. What does the presence and dialectical relationship between *turathi*, *watani*, and *tarab* forms mean in terms of Gaza's post-Oslo social soundscape? I believe the question of communal space lends an explanation. Several of the musicians came from households exhibiting a love of music and a commonplace loyalty to Palestinian resistance—seen clearly in the choice of songs performed by Dawaween and Sol Band, for example. In Gaza, the traditional *jalsa* or *sahra*, the informal gathering of *tarab* musicianship and appreciation, took place in politicized environments. The circle of "cultivated listeners" forming the social milieu of Reem's *jalsat* included Nafiz Ghneim and some of her mother's other socialist comrades from the Hizb al-Sha'b (Palestinian People's Party), who were listener-participants as well as political influences. One expression of the musicians' radical view of post-Oslo developments came through discussion of Gaza's existing music school structure; Reem was most cutting in her critique, railing against its financial inaccessibility. I see this critique as representing progressive nationalist and socialistic concern for the future of Palestine, drawing on the life experience of struggling for instruments, lessons, and jobs. The fact that other musicians and contributors to this discussion arrived at similar conclusions again highlights the critical, collective spirit developing in Gaza, akin to the solidarity and "group feeling" ascribed to Ibn Khaldun's concept of *'asabiya* but, I suggest, tending toward the politicized comradeship expanded on in the next chapter.

A running theme of this book concerns the way that stylistic and narrative materials are appropriated at the grassroots. Gaza's impoverishment is a case in point, that aesthetic fields attached to concepts such as *tarab* are proletarianized along with their populations. The adoption of *tarab* by those outside of elite circles sets a challenge to the European-borrowed conservatoire model and to histories of elite practice. Or, from another angle, the stories of their parents' formerly secure, well-paid employment, and declining fortunes of the majority in Gaza mean that "cultured" tastes are brought to bear. If, to paraphrase Marx and Engels, the proletariat is recruited from other classes in the struggles and crises of capitalism,<sup>91</sup> here the cultural artifacts associated with the better off

are nationalized for the masses. The borders imposed between secular or nonpolitical forms and revolutionary nationalism are broken down in the process, and *tarab* is enmeshed with Palestinian heritage.

### Conservatism and Its Discontents

An important subplot in the musicians' stories concerns depictions of Islamic conservatism in the social life of Gaza, observed in moves to prevent young women performing with *shabab*. Though analyses of the first intifada and its aftermath have identified trends of religious fundamentalism as being connected to political and economic failures,<sup>92</sup> some have homed in on the victory of Hamas in legislative council elections in 2006 as a decisive change. Acknowledging the sensationalizing practices of pro-Zionist media outlets exemplified above by coverage of Rawan Okasha's concerts, and in light of the experiences of Reem Anbar and other women musicians, I see discussion of gender relations in the internal *ghurba* as inseparable from questions of regional and global power, the agendas of imperialist actors, and shifting landscapes of war, counterrevolution, and resistance since the fall of the socialist bloc.

At the time of her photography project in Gaza, Boushnak writes that Reem had faced a ban on public performance by Gaza's Hamas government.<sup>93</sup> Clarifying that this meant that she continued to perform and teach, Reem reports that it sometimes seemed unclear who was doing the banning, with no official announcements or notifications, and street-level conservatives enforcing the message. Some concerts were, however, halted by police, including her first performance with Sol Band, which was stopped halfway through. In November 2019, Sol was subject to a fatwa published on social media by a preacher named Muhammad Suleiman al-Farra, who had been angered by the band's series of videos in open-air spaces, and alleged public indecency (*tabarruj*)—the allegation aimed at the presence of Rahaf Shamaly in the band. Al-Farra had few public links to Hamas and the band's series of videos had been approved by Hamas-led city authorities; those condemning the fatwa online included Hamas supporters.

This controversy around Sol Band caught the attention of notoriously right-wing, anti-Muslim and pro-Israel think tank the Gatestone Institute, which published a long diatribe on Hamas's banning all music except that

which promotes “terror,” “hate and violence.”<sup>94</sup> The article claimed that five Sol members had immediately fled to Turkey, “apparently out of fear for their lives”; in reality, three had already left by that point, joining families in Istanbul and, according to Said, “because the visas and travel for gigs would be easier.” They would return to Gaza to film new music videos in January 2023. Less subtle than the *New York Times* review of Dawaween, which hinged on (mis)interpretations of female body language, musical repertoire, and silencing the musicians’ own narratives, the Gatestone article took a similar orientalist viewpoint, more nakedly mired in imperialist insinuations, and seeing Gaza as uninhabitable for youth, not because of the dire economic situation brought by a well-documented Zionist blockade but caused by Hamas’s legacy of armed resistance.

Abu Lughod sees Western-based projects on women’s rights in Muslim countries weaponizing sensationalist narratives to “save” female populations from their own cultures, launched during periods of great violence against Muslim women, including Israel’s wars on Gaza.<sup>95</sup> Rahaf and the young Palestinian women musicians in Gaza are totally absent from the Gatestone report—she has, in fact, remained in Gaza and continues to sing publicly. As Sayigh reminds us, with reference to oral histories of refugee women, “class and gender combine to silence women, and exclude their voices from the historical record.”<sup>96</sup>

Contemporaneous with these reports, Arab press coverage of vocalist Raneen Okasha resembled that of a gossip column, with Egyptian media questioning her “disappearance” as an artist when she moved back to Gaza from Egypt, exclusively “revealing” pictures of her as a hijab-wearing mother of three, years after her initial fame.<sup>97</sup> Sayigh analyzes Western feminist constructions of “the Arab/Muslim ‘home’ as always and similarly oppressive to women,” and sees confrontations with the Israeli occupation as “highlighting change (or resistance to change)” within a nationalist framework. The chapters on Gaza in this book show that young women challenge and instigate change, and draw on their musical talents to assert collective equality in group performance. Like her sisters Rawan and Shayma, Raneen also joins *jalsat* in their family home. For her part, Rawan was clear that she had had to stand down as a Dawaween band member due to social issues with gender mixing, but continues to sing *mawawil*, Umm Kulthum, and other challenging repertoires in mixed-gender gatherings.



Analyzing the position of women in Middle East political movements, El Said, Meari, and Pratt argue that factors such as “political economies or imperialist geopolitics, shaping women’s experiences are ignored, whilst religion is posited as necessarily oppressive for women, as opposed to secularism, which supposedly guarantees their right.”<sup>98</sup> To Pestana, attempts by Western media and academia to paint Gaza as a fundamentalist statelet ignore the role of outside forces and the Palestinian Authority in cementing positions of inequality, finding that:

After the signature of the Oslo Accords . . . the role of the women almost disappeared and many of the successful women’s grassroots organizations were transformed into NGOs, mostly connected to Western donors and pursuing liberal-oriented agendas.<sup>99</sup>

This process is described by Islah Jad as “a shift from ‘power to’ women in the grass roots to ‘power over’ them by the new elite.”<sup>100</sup> Discussing *Arab Idol* winner Mohammed Assaf, Reem says: “He’s political. Why else would Mahmoud Abbas put all this money into him? I’ve never seen these kind of opportunities for a woman. Never.” A post-Soviet era of regional imperialist intervention, destabilization, and NGOization sees the rising Gulf dominance of Arab mass media and a Palestinian bourgeoisie increasingly loyal to the charms of Saudi or Qatari wealth.

While Israel bombs cultural centers and the Fatah-led PA arrests music makers, Hamas has walked a tightrope between its recent history as a force of resistance and a socially conservative outlook. It is doubly revealing that the second intifada saw a mobilization of music and performance, and that a growing impasse in the national liberation movement has marked something of a retreat. The shifting global balance of forces away from socialist and revolutionary currents, and the rising of political brands of Islam, have been driven by such phenomena as Western support for jihadist forces in 1970s Afghanistan, the chaos brought by the 1990 and 2003 invasions of Iraq, and of imperialist-backed monarchies’ funneling of arms to fundamentalist groups in Syria more recently. Palestine has, in many ways, held out against the most extreme of these trends—Da‘ish has never taken root and Muslim parties draw increasingly on nationalist rather than Islamic phraseology.<sup>101</sup>

For Khaled Barakat, “there are many Hamases,” in regions of Palestine and the Arab *ghurba*, with Gaza constituting an “extreme example,”<sup>102</sup> full of contradictions and mixed tactical messages. Indeed, female musicians in this chapter have sometimes accepted employment as musicians for Hamas-run charities. The limits of public performance for women exposed in situations faced by Reem, Rawan, Raneen, and Rahaf, or scandalized by Hamas’s enemies, are linked to Susan Muaddi Darraj’s description of concurrent and parallel histories of nationalism and feminism.<sup>103</sup> While the progress of both appears to have stalled, the critique represented by grassroots Palestinian musicians indicates drives to challenge positions of powerlessness. Zionist bombs, fatwas, or PA arrests are not enough to silence Palestinian women.

### Conclusion: *Sumud* of the Street

On August 9, 2018, Israeli warplanes flattened the Said al-Mashal theater in Shati’ refugee camp. In an immediate outpouring of popular anguish, *kuffieh*-wearing youths gathered to perform in the debris. In front of a banner that hailed the *samidoun* (steadfast ones), singing became an act of defiance and of remembrance, for a small theater where many youngsters had learned to play, act, or dance *dabke*, including Reem, Rawan, and Said.<sup>104</sup> Among those performing in the rubble, Mohammad Okasha described the atmosphere:

I went to sing in the rubble and debris, and children gathered to sit around, happy to hear Palestinian songs that express love, peace, generosity, and our beautiful heritage. . . . The children around me were smiling, despite the pain. . . . This is the hope inside us. We’ll return to our villages one day.

Drawing on the optimism of *sumud*, the concert after the Mashal bombing featured multiple songs by Julia Boutros. Also sung by Sol Band, “Nihna al-thawra wa-l-ghadab” seemingly reached out to the refugees of Gaza:

You will forget these days of hardship, oh forgotten people  
Throughout these years of estrangement [*ghurba*]

We've become exiles<sup>105</sup> in our own country  
 Take a look, oh freedom, at these forgotten tears of joy  
 Precious to you and me, this coming victory.

Like the youths smiling in the face of arrest in May 2021, a search for joy amid colonial terror enabled collective empowerment—answering back to liberal ascriptions of *sumud* as primarily relating to suffering—and physically standing ground on an embattled land.

The narratives and artistic choices wielded by this young crowd are allied to a grassroots critique of Zionism, underdevelopment, and a Palestinian comprador bourgeoisie. As shown in the writings of Sayigh and Baroud,<sup>106</sup> the refugees and dispossessed have voiced strong judgments of *ghurba* and the failures of negotiated strategies to serve their interests. I develop this line of thinking to define a *sumud*-as-critique, with narratives to challenge underdevelopment under Zionist blockade. Whether providing withering assessments of energy crises, conservative threats to the intifada's victories for women, or the limited reach and unreliability of foreign-funded institutions, the young musicians engage through nationalist language and political culture.

From its position as a historic and continuing locus of anti-Zionist struggle predicated on intensified national oppression and a particular makeup of urban and peasant refugees after the Nakba, Gaza remains a center of revolutionary ideas and popular energy. This chapter affirms that youth play a critical role in cultural insurgency and redefining *turath*, suggesting how diverse aesthetic practices can be utilized in new contexts. As Barakat reminds us, the concept of *sumud* was defined in pre-Oslo eras by its collective content, “for people, not individuals,”<sup>107</sup> as argued in Naji al-Ali's “*nahnu—WE*” cartoon. This is borne out in the experiences of collective politicization among those who have left Gaza, explored in the next chapter on Istanbul, in histories of grassroots social organization in other regions of Palestinian struggle,<sup>108</sup> and alluded to in descriptions of the spirit or energy of Gaza's populace. Bringing new and old tradition to the streets has been fundamental to refugee youth expression, forecasting a communal basis for future revolutions in Palestinian music.

## CHAPTER 7

# *Sumud* and the City: Old and New Comradeship in Istanbul

Fares Anbar, Ahmed Haddad, and Palestinian Musicianship on the Turkish Migrant Scene

Escaping the city felt like an opportunity to breathe, take in a momentary change of pace, and enjoy some time with family and friends while the world around slipped into panic. Even under a coronavirus “lockdown,” Istanbul was relentless, traffic-jammed, clamorous. Fares had talked up this trip for weeks—a day on an island, hiking, fresh food, and music. It was also a chance to meet with a social group he had connected with quite separately from his continuing association with Sol Band and the *shabab* he had grown up with in Gaza. He would refer to characters in both groups as *rifaq* (comrades) during the ferry trip from Istanbul to Burgazadası, giving a sense that this crowd was more directly engaged in politics:

They’re supporters of Jabha Sha’biya [PFLP] and the Kurds here in Turkey, and are really into revolutionary music, Marxism, Kanafani. . . . The whole island is against Erdoğan actually, and these comrades have many friends on the Turkish left.

This description was set alongside a sketch of the island as a dream-cape of peaceful living. Fares had come camping during the summer and spoke fondly of fruit picking, playing with bandmates beside the waves or on the hilltop. As we hiked the narrow and steepening road northwest from the harbor to a one-room house, walking between hordes of street cats, we picked berries while Fares spoke of the community spirit on the island, pointing out neighbors: “This one grows parsley, coriander, and

other herbs and Umm Mahdi grows clementines. There's no money involved but they swap food produce and don't rely much on shopping."

As if to heighten the otherworldly quality of the island in contrast to Istanbul, the lack of traffic noise—or of any sounds at all other than the sea breeze in the trees and grass—the voice of Sabah Fakhri could be heard singing "Ya mal al-sham" (Oh treasure of Damascus) and *qudud halabiya*,<sup>1</sup> played from a small speaker as we arrived at the house. We picked up two of Fares's friends, a Palestinian and a Turk, and after a short ramble around the island, came back to sit around a garden table. While waiting for the *maqluba* to finish cooking, the wine flowed, and the group sang to Fares's *riqq* playing and his sister Reem's *oud*:

Such times we've reached  
They say the rich give to the poor  
As if money takes off of its own accord  
To this one a little, to another a bundle

What a good one!

Mocking the idle rich and calling them to return wealth to the pockets of the people, the lyrics to Ziad Rahbani's satirical "Shu hal ayyam" (roughly, "Such times we've reached") find the origin of profit in the masses.<sup>2</sup> Other enthusiastically sung melodies included the socialist anthem "Nizilna 'al-shawari'" and the well-known Sayyid Darwish number "al-Hilwa di." Lyrics to the latter are widely translated and a Turkish woman present, who was learning Arabic, sang in her native tongue.

The morning is glorious  
And though our pockets are penniless  
Our mood is serene and peaceful  
We put our hope at your door, oh merciful one

If we're patient  
All will change for the better.

Aside from his visiting sister, none of the other friends present were known to Fares before he left Gaza. Although his friendship group and

bandmates from back home formed a primary social circle in Istanbul, he was drawn to this new group by a shared language, a (mostly) common Palestinian identity, and similar outlooks on life, music, and politics. Among the themes of discussion around the table were the recent arrest of leading HDP (People's Democratic Party) politician Leyla Güven—Umm Mahdi had heard of other disappearances of those who had spoken out against the Turkish government—and the Jordanian state's crackdown on Palestinian activism. Discussion carried on during the return ferry trip, with critique of bandmates who were too focused on social media, of others' appearing *bayıkh* (corny) onstage, and on Mohammed Assaf's recent sidelining in the Gulf following official normalization with Israel. "He could have taken a stand," insisted Mahdi.

The *maqluba* had been a masterpiece. Traditionally based on rice with aubergine, potatoes, onions, and tomatoes, this recipe featured chicken and, through a "magic" tapping on the inverted pan, it held together when the pot was removed. Its name means "upside down." Out of the city for a day, Fares had hoped similarly to turn upside down the poverty, uncertainty, and gravity of migrant life. Time to step back, with comrades, plan a course of action, and overturn the natural order of things during the process.

If we're patient  
All will change for the better

I walk even while sleeping,  
I am looking for a reason to stay  
I always see the ones that left  
I walk day and night  
Forty-nine years on these roads  
In the valleys, mountains, and deserts  
In foreign lands I make my way  
I walk day and night.

- ÂŞIK VEYSEL, "UZUN İNCE BİR YOLDAYIM" (I WALK A LONG,  
NARROW ROAD)

As in other locations, music scenes in Turkey are delineated by aesthetic forms that refer to sociopolitical groupings, class, geography, nationality,

and a range of social phenomena. Performance spaces entered into by minority musicians are often complex, negotiating informal working conditions, and huge disparities of income and rights when compared to established Turkish musicians. Like displaced Syrians in their midst, Palestinians enter a country which officially claims to stand for their rights.<sup>3</sup> Yet, despite the relative freedom of movement and employment presented to those arriving in Istanbul from blockaded Gaza in recent years, the experiences of musicians like Fares Anbar (percussion), Ahmed Haddad (guitar and vocals), and their musical and nonperforming friends and family members expose the harsh realities of those lacking “the right to the city.”<sup>4</sup>

As a center of cultural life since Ottoman times and a pole of regional migration, Istanbul has unsurprisingly attracted Palestinian refugee musicians in recent years. Coming for the relative ease of getting tourist visas compared to other regional countries—and with an established and renowned performing music industry—the *shabab* bring skills acquired in Gaza, largely through communal learning and self-taught musicianship, with the experiences of having performed publicly since their early teenage years. Now in their mid-twenties, they have kept Sol Band together and, though some members have remained in Gaza, they have continued to write, arrange, and record music for an upcoming album, rehearsing mostly in shared accommodation and, sporadically, at small parties held by Palestinian friends for birthdays and other social occasions. At the same time, Fares and Ahmed, among the more experienced players in a larger group, have networked with other migrant musicians to form the new group discussed in this chapter, performing a regional mix of musics alongside left-leaning messages, with encouragement from friends involved in local activism, including Palestinian and Turkish leftists. Music forms part of a process of collective solidarity, politicizing support networks, and challenging the limits of the city for refugee performers.

This chapter brings Palestinian narratives of *sumud* into a new region of exilic experience,<sup>5</sup> structuring analysis of musical narratives of steadfastness around the aesthetic and poetic paths taken by a relatively recently formed musical ensemble and linked social group of young performers and organizers. Terms of address, language, and musicopolitical belonging are analyzed here through concepts developed by Jodi Dean in her theory of comradeship.<sup>6</sup> Of particular interest are the relationships

developed by the musicians with existing and newly found comrades, positioning the conscious embrace of revolutionary musicality and “refusal to submit,”<sup>7</sup> against the backdrop of an exploitative cityscape, offering understandings of the ways young Palestinians address the impasse in the national liberation movement and seek to overcome marginalization in exile.

Taking in a repertoire separate from that developed in Sol Band during the three years Fares and Ahmed spent in Istanbul, this discussion considers familiar and “new” influences on their mode of performing, taking seriously an attraction to what they see as a revolutionary musical tradition, through their appropriation of regional and non-Arab forms. Analogous processes have historically occurred alongside (and largely in close proximity to) movements of resistance on the ground, such as the Palestinian intifadas or popular movements in places of exile. In the practices of this group, however, leftist imaginings take place in a time of political paralysis, in an intimate group of likeminded peers, galvanized by more experienced *rifaq* in their circle. Their concept of comradeship draws on these experiences, along with the tribulations of colonialist war and resistance in the formative years of the Gaza *shabab* crystallizing in musically framed commitment.

Noting the significance of the band being formed on island trips away from the city, key questions here concern the collective processes of music making and organizing through which Palestinian musicians navigate materialities of power in Istanbul. What genres or traditions are relevant to such tasks, and (how) does Palestine feature within them? If answers are to be found partly through the aesthetic flexibilities of the musicians, where do we locate their narratives of *sumud* in relation to their repertoire? And by what means is this concept relived or rethought through their experiences? I contend here that the process through which artistry becomes “the identity of resistance,”<sup>8</sup> in the words of former political prisoner Wisam Rafeedie, is at the same time linked to the culture of critique seen in the narratives of musicians in other chapters, and in particular to the youth in Gaza of which Fares and Ahmed formed a part. The critical features of *sumud*, I argue, become powerful by virtue of their shared expression as acts of comradeship, a theme developed in detail by Meari.

I will first consider the connotations of the *samid*—one who embodies *sumud*—in its sociomusical context in Istanbul, discussing the use



of musical repertoire by the *shabab*, before outlining theories of comradeship, and contemplating the alternatives thrown up in the musicians' narratives.

### Gaza to Istanbul: The Steadfast *Shabab*

To be honest, our situation isn't great. We left Gaza with a lot of hope that we'd be able to organize concerts and compose music in freedom, to meet new people. . . . But the situation of crisis affecting the whole world, even before Corona, hit us too. We keep trying and making plans but with little success—it's as though we're forced into *sumud*. But under *sumud* and the pressure we live under, how can we make life better, despite everything?

—AHMED HADDAD

We walked until the darkness made it impossible to go on, and decided to lie down and go to sleep all huddled together in a heap. We were starving and thirsty, and the mosquitoes added to our misery. This was our baptism of fire.

—CHE GUEVARA<sup>9</sup>

Still in Gaza in May 2017, Ahmed (figure 14) worked with keyboardist Mohammad Salem to film a cover version of “Ana mawgud” (I still exist)<sup>10</sup> by pro-Palestine Egyptian rock group Massar Egbari. The band's own video had edited together footage of 2011 protests in Egypt, combining still photographs of youths confronting state forces and women on megaphones with imagery of politicians now deposed. Set to chordal accompaniment in a pop-rock arrangement, the lyrics by Amar Mustafa repeat the figure of *raghm* (despite). Despite handcuffs, border controls, heartache, “I still exist; I'm still capable of *sumud*.” The vocalist promises to “remind you” of ongoing oppression, to “change all that comes,” and boasts a “voice stronger than your rifle.” In their own recording, Ahmed and Mohammad remained true to the song's simple melody and instrumental backing but, filming in a darkened room, did not splice their recording with imagery of Gaza. The poetic references were clear enough.

Istanbul presented different challenges. Since arriving in late 2018, Ahmed, Fares, and other Gaza *shabab*<sup>11</sup> have had different experiences of



14. Ahmed Haddad. Photograph by Ramadan M. al-Agha.

work, performance, study, and social life. While Ahmed has taken language courses and worked in various informal jobs—seeing music as “enriching your life” and admitting “I’ll take any other job alongside it”—Fares has eked out a living through music, from busking to restaurant bands, and selling his own brand of percussion instruments. Both appeared in a one-off video with Syrian Armenian singer Lena Chamamyan.<sup>12</sup> None in their circle from Gaza had landed lightly in Istanbul, with financial difficulties compounded by not having legal permissions to work and being forced into super exploitative positions in various sectors. Ahmed worked in around five different jobs in 2019: “At any moment the boss could say *ma’ al-salama* [goodbye].” Before an online Sol Band concert in March 2021, Fares joked that “some of the band haven’t eaten since yesterday”—it turned out to be true, and he would also admit to not sleeping for days at a time during summer gigging in the tourist industry; two in their group faced eviction by private landlords during the coronavirus crisis. The economic situation in Istanbul has led many in their social group to return to Gaza.

Palestinian and other migrant players are second-class participants in Istanbul music scenes; they have no access to union protection and contracts, and there are established preferences for Turkish nationals.<sup>13</sup> In an early experience of the city, both Fares and Ahmed report facing intimidation from casual racist “Gray Wolves” types when they attempted busking on the streets around the central Gezi Park/Taksim district; family members have also met anti-Arab racism in public places, sometimes aimed at Syrians who occupy similar roles.<sup>14</sup>

Seeing uricide in Istanbul municipal policy and the modernization and “securitization” of Taksim, Öktem sees a “space in suspension, whose ties with the city and its memories of social struggles have been severed.”<sup>15</sup> Like Egypt, Turkish economic crisis and the embrace of neoliberalism have been accompanied by a further rightward political and social drift, social cleansing,<sup>16</sup> and an unpredictable domestic situation—particularly for migrants—linked to the regional neo-Ottoman ambitions of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government.<sup>17</sup> The experiences of Gaza refugees in Istanbul further highlight the marginalized existence of minorities under an “urban growth machine.”<sup>18</sup> Yet, as Manal Massalha illustrates with regard to colonized cities of historic Palestine, the process of claiming rights to the city demonstrates that the seemingly all-powerful drives of capital can be challenged:

It is in and through public space that democratic rights, and the struggle to achieve such rights, are exercised and where alternative movements have the potential to arise and contest issues of citizenship and democracy.<sup>19</sup>

By late 2019, Fares and Ahmed had found something of a niche and had begun to perform regularly at a café-bar run by PFLP supporters in Beyoğlu. Though it did not amount to a full-time income, they had come to an arrangement where they would sell their own tickets and share out the proceeds between the musicians. Finding a willing space in the city had taken place alongside of and in conjunction with forming a new group, also featuring Iranian violinist Danial and Moroccan multilingual vocalist Butayna. Though the band was able to make use of the venue by arranging its own concerts, mediating somewhat the problems adjusting to the city, much of this collective organizing process took place geographically—and

conceptually—at a distance from urban Istanbul. Ahmed sees the group Ada (“Island” in Turkish) as “a real cultural project,” while Fares explains that it is “not a band, exactly”:

It is more a group of people who love music of different shades [*alwan*] brought together on the island, and taken to other places. Everyone brings their own ideas and we work on them together. There’s also an economic relationship . . . it’s also about getting work. We play under the banner of Ada because the island brought us together.

For both musicians, part of the attraction is described in escapist terms: it is a chance to breathe or unwind in nature’s calming surroundings. Both also saw the group coming back to Istanbul from hiking, walking, music making, and relaxing on Burgazadası with “new energy” to rescale the urban summit. Ahmed drew comparisons with Palestine:

The island really is different to where we’ve come from—Gaza is this tight space of 41 km [in length]. But finding ourselves in Istanbul, among non-stop traffic, noise, and packed buses, like many capitals, going to the island offered a different kind of energy, clean air, and scenery that was actually rather strange to us. We found a lot of peace there between the people, even among the animals. You just sit there and listen to the waves and the birds. We’d go there whenever we could spare a couple of hours.

Fares describes a scene typical of the group’s activities, where the four musicians—plus Mahdi, who offered advice as a listener and organizer—would take instruments and sit on a coastal wall, playing and discussing arrangements, concepts, and upcoming gigs. They would debate a song’s relevance to the particular period or performance setting, instrumental arrangement, the language in which it should be sung, and a range of other issues. While some of the material was regionally popular and did not carry overt political themes—such as Fairuz’s “Raj’in ya hawa” (We’re returning, my love) or the folksong “Fug al-nakhal,” Fares maintained that “all of the songs have a relationship to revolution, to standing up for our rights, or to old ideas about real love [*hubb sadiq*].” Fares saw early twentieth-century material by Sayyid Darwish as a case in point:

Thinking of “Ahu da illi sar” [This is how it came to be], for example, why do we sing this kind of music? It tells you that, although 100 years have passed, Arab countries are still facing the same problems that were around when it was written—including occupation and war. This song was written a century ago, but Ahmed and I are from the 2000s generation and we have lived through three wars, plus the split between Hamas and Fatah. Even when we sing about love or celebration, I’d consider this an expression of what we have lived through.

The working arrangement performed by Ada revolved around a rhythm section of guitar and *riqq*, a violin supporting the main melody, and vocalists Butayna and Ahmed sharing verses. Unlike versions of traditionalized song that have tended to remove microtonal subtleties or ornamentation, Butayna and Daniel play leading roles in recentering ‘*urab* decorations of the vocal line and melodic interludes. Originally composed as a response to British reaction to the 1919 Egyptian revolution, “Ahu da illi sar” is widely performed, including by other Palestinian and leftist Arab musicians;<sup>20</sup> it was also sung at the Tahrir Square protests in 2011 Cairo. Badi‘ Khairy’s lyrics are extremely well known:

This is how it came to be  
You have no right to blame me

How can you accuse me, oh sir  
When the wealth of our country is not in our hands.

Subsequent verses evoke the comradeship of fighting “hand in hand” against the common enemy of the people, emphasizing strength in numbers and the glory of the nation in the face of the occupier—in 1919, Britain occupied both Egypt and Palestine, and peasant and worker mobilizations took place across a broader region that also included Libya and Tunisia.<sup>21</sup> Thematically, there is strong poetic logic for its use as a leftist political anthem by Palestinians, since it is written in a common lexicon of struggle involving *al-sha‘b* (the masses), *al-qadiyya* (the cause), the verb *qum* (rise), and the concept of *haqq* (rights or justice). While *sumud* is sometimes linked to patience, “Ahu da illi sar” points to the limits of patiently enduring. Sung in Istanbul by migrant musicians voicing a broader

commitment to revolutionary ideals, such poetic concepts form part of a process by which they identify themselves with traditions of resistance.

At the same time, the repertoire sung in the Ada project represents a reframing of Sayyid Darwish songs, themselves seen as liberating Egyptian music from clear Ottoman Turkish frameworks.<sup>22</sup> Presented in new contexts of displacement, Fares, Ahmed, and their newfound bandmates implicitly respond to the question raised provocatively by Khaled Jubran, who opined that there “needed to be a good reason” for rearranging “*Ahuda illi sar*” in today’s contexts.<sup>23</sup> The process of “becoming *samid*” in Istanbul, a phrase used by both musicians, draws on their experience of becoming refugees for a second time, referencing contemporary obstacles faced by Palestinian youth. In a video filmed by the group on the Burgazadası coast, they perform a slow-tempo interpretation of “*Zuruni*” (Visit me), another much-performed Darwish song, whose lyrics implore: “Visit me once a year; God forbid [*haram*] you forget me.” Fares had recently been denied a visa to perform in Britain on the basis that the UK Border Agency was not convinced that he would not claim asylum; the word *haram* also means “prohibited.” None of the Palestinians could easily visit Gaza and are barred from returning to familial homelands in historic Palestine.

Fairuz’s “*Raj’in ya hawa*,” ostensibly addressed to a lover, now connotes the geographical restrictions faced by Palestinian refugees and their hopes of restitution.

We’re returning, my love  
To the home of love  
On the fire of love  
We’re returning.

Sung in the ambiance of their recent journeys and migrant labors, these lines carry a sense of optimism—a noted feature of *sumud* narratives<sup>24</sup>—and could be seen variously as a call for the right of Palestinian refugees to return, or of the Ada group’s reenergized return to Istanbul after escaping the pressures of city exile for a day.<sup>25</sup> Where visions of steadfastness have traditionally pointed to the *fellah* as an archetypal figure representing rootedness to the land of Palestine,<sup>26</sup> the narratives of Fares and Ahmed begin with their “2000s generation” endurance of war,

blockade, and partition in Gaza, and chronicle their traversals of Istanbul through a rethinking of the meanings embedded in their musical repertoire. Looked at in this way, sentiments hinted at in “Ana mawgud” are channeled into commonly sung pieces, overturning their depoliticization, and speaking to direct experiences of exile. The musicians confront the hardship of the city through a collective commitment to *sumud*, presenting a united front of fellow travelers against marginalization in Istanbul and separation from Palestine.

### Comrades in Music, *Jabha*, and *Hizib*

When people say “comrade,” they change the world.

—JODI DEAN<sup>27</sup>

Reem remembers that, as a thirteen-year-old, her brother Fares had fallen in with a religious crowd at an Islamic Jihad-run mosque, had begun to wear traditional “Pakistani” clothing (*jallabiyya*), and was learning about martyrdom. After finding out that he had clasped a sword, “mum rushed down to the *masjid* and confronted the *sheikhs*.” While it was not the only reason, the incident expedited Fares’s leaving the mosque, spending more time with his mother’s comrades, “atheists and communists, all of them,” and being encouraged more to get into music. In his words,

In the end, I wasn’t really convinced by the religious route and got more interested in resistance through music and knowledge. I began to feel that music was a bigger and more powerful weapon to promote the struggle of Palestine. This is the reason I became closer to the idea of having comrades to work with and seeing music as a way of fighting for our rights. Of course, my mother and her comrades were a big influence.

It is more conventional for groups of youths from Gaza city to refer to each other as *sadiq/a* (masc./fem.) or *sahib/a*, defined clearly as friend or companion. *Rafiq/a* (plural *rifaq/rafiqat*), or comrade, is comparable in meaning, but it also connotes political links. Reem says that this term of address entered the household via the Hizb al-Sha‘b, a Marxist organization supported by their mother Umm Rasheed, suggesting that its

values and terminology rubbed off on Fares and his friendship group. Meeting PFLP-supporting Palestinians in Istanbul, what had previously been quite general ideas of creating *iltizam* (commitment), through music came full circle.

Dean explores the political relation indexed by *comrade*, highlighting its use as a term of address, of sameness, as a carrier of expectations, and as a figure of belonging within socialist and communist traditions. Here, *comrade* is a generic figure expressing relations between those on the same side of a political struggle, who “tie themselves together instrumentally, for a common purpose”<sup>28</sup> of fighting together in order to win. As an organized challenge to a racist, sexist, capitalist society, *comrade* serves as an ego ideal, “naming a relation no longer determined by these factors, providing a site from which they can be judged and addressed.”<sup>29</sup> Brandishing the term politically expresses a group-centered process in which people refuse to submit, gaining consciousness of their strength in numbers. Such relationships, according to Dean, differ from friendship, which is not originally or necessarily political. Comradeship, on the other hand, is intrinsically political, binding people together as a party, replacing individual singularities of friendship and identity.<sup>30</sup> Recognizing this distinction, Fares says he sees the term *rifaq* as implying something other than “ordinary friendship,” but rather grouping those who have “become steadfast [*samid*] and patient [*sabr*] together,” sharing the same experiences and “sharing the same affiliations [*intima’at*] in politics and music.”

Linked directly to the “disciplined organization” which sees communism as the political horizon of humanity, Dean’s drawing on the Marxist literary works of Kollontai and Gorky finds parallels in revolutionary Palestine and wider Arabic traditions.<sup>31</sup> As the struggle in Bilad al-Sham deepened, Mahmoud Darwish’s “On Poetry” (1971) called out to the commitment of “comrade poets” (*ya rifaqi al-shu’ara*):

Our verses  
Have no color  
No taste  
No sound  
If they do not carry the lantern  
From house to house.<sup>32</sup>



In this work, the collective responsibility of the committed artist is combined with recognizing that “we’re in a new world,” and seeing silence as better than failing to reach the masses. A transitory history evoked by Darwish as “what’s past is dead,” is taken up by Salem Jubran in “The Singer of the Revolution”:

It is my fate to sing  
 To hunger  
 And remain singing,  
 From my wounds to bleed  
 And remain singing.  
 If I die in battle  
 The songs,  
 Among the comrades, will take my place  
 And fight for me.<sup>33</sup>

Both examples move beyond the use of *comrade* as a simple term of address into connecting their sense of commitment to Palestinian movements on the ground as young people flocked to nationalist and socialist organizing; Darwish had studied in the Soviet Union and Jubran was a noted communist. In her memoirs, prominent PFLP member Leila Khaled remembers childhood references to comrades in her family’s expulsion to Lebanon, and later used the term politically toward fellow activists.<sup>34</sup> Her comrade Ghassan Kanafani would expound the words of his character Umm Sa’d, a real-life figure from the camp:

What did we give and gain from the revolution? We should give our life and our all to the revolution as we become more knowledgeable, cleaner in mind and spirit, love each other, sacrifice more and become brave and truthful.<sup>35</sup>

Fares’s drawing on concepts of *hubb sadiq*, as “genuine” or “truthful” love, also entwined with a spectrum of living music within a spirit of revolution. Played by comrades, music embodies *iltizam*, even when its subject matter is seemingly apolitical. Or, as Salim Jubran suggests, the song of the revolutionary musician itself represents comradeship, reverberating into future struggle. Like the conscious bridges built between the

present and past generations of Palestine's musical revolutionaries in early 2000s Egypt, the Istanbul group draw on revolutionary tradition forged in eras of intense resistance. Other Palestinian musicians had taken on the language of comradeship, including poet-singer Rajah al-Salfiti, George Kirmiz, Kofia, and Rim Banna; see also the intifada song "In 'ad rifaqi" (If my comrades returned).<sup>36</sup> In Fares's retelling, the journey toward this left-nationalist consciousness traversed early flirtations with other prominent trends, such as political Islam, and is narrated through seeing music and knowledge as weapons. Kanafani famously compared his pen to a rifle.<sup>37</sup>

I argue here that adoption of the term *rifaq/comrades* by musicians and supporters of the Ada group moves beyond its potential use as an empty brand or in-group slang. Processes of discussion, band musicianship, and physical exploration had taken place alongside a binding of social relationships with comrades actively supporting the PFLP.<sup>38</sup> This broader circle included those, for example, who had spent time behind bars in Arab countries where Palestinian activism is heavily cracked down on. It is significant that, having lived under bombardment, blockade, and underdevelopment in Gaza, Fares and Ahmed also cite experiences of the harsh realities of migrant Istanbul as backdrops for toughening their commitments to collective *sumud*. Facing problems of basic survival as refugees, of organizing music, and of being involved in the thought processes concerning aesthetic and conceptual performance, being comrades meant escaping the isolation of enduring this period individually. But it also meant political education and a space for imagining a Palestinian musicianship of the future.

### Revolutionary Dreaming: Performing the Liberated Future

In a narrow flat in Küçükçekmece, on the western outskirts of Istanbul, sitting on a wooden coffee table below a small poster of Che Guevara<sup>39</sup> and a bookshelf housing a Sayyid Darwish biography, a Kanafani novel, and the Qur'an, Fares was preparing his *riqq* for practice. Traditionally, Arab percussionists would heat the skins of their instruments next to open fires, but he had found a novel technique through the humble cigarette lighter. I was reminded of the Cuban Special Period concept of *inventos*—finding solutions to economic hardship through creative measures.<sup>40</sup> Among the

songs listened to by the Sol *shabab* was a cover of Cuban socialist anthem “Hasta Siempre,” performed by imprisoned Turkish band, Grup Yorum. Behind Fares, Che’s picture smiled beside the quote: “We are realists. We dream the impossible.”

The path of seeing music making as a revolutionary act is still being walked by Fares and Ahmed, with no promise of an unbroken road ahead; indeed, music and politics are both frequently casualties of passing youthful zeal. This chapter has traced the developing consciousness of the musicians back to Gaza, which evoked street energy and revolutionary heritage for others, as cited in chapter 6. The circumstances of a second exile in Istanbul served only to deepen convictions in alternative modalities for thinking about music and society alongside committed socialists who encouraged their artistic *iltizam*. There was something communistic, too, about the Ada group’s espousal of the benefits of island life. Its mixed (and reportedly, leftist) migrant communities were a source of inspiration in the way they were seen to live off the land, rooted against the ruling Turkish autocracy, and provoking further musical internationalism. Prior to forming their new band, Fares and Ahmed had found fewer reliable places to perform in terms of the rate of pay, regularity, and precarious relationships with promoters. Fares suggests, however, that there were benefits to this kind of gigging, which exposed them to the scene and seemed to have built up a thirst in them for exploring cross-regional musics.

I worked in other Turkish-owned places with different bands, sometimes with Ahmed. We’d play *turathi* music from different places, Turkish music or Iraqi music, for example.

Ahmed adds:

All of our experiences in music here are slightly different. I’ve played with others, for example Turks, Syrians, and experienced other kinds of music.

The Ada group saw language as furthering a performance ideal of reaching out to others. “Sometimes you’ll be walking on the islands and meet Greek people, for example, and it makes you want to speak to them musically,” says Fares. Spontaneous meetings become the fuel for

musicopoetic experimentation. Arranging “al-Bint al-shalabiya,” the group decided to sing it in four languages (Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, and Spanish), referencing its pre-Nakba history in Bilad al-Sham<sup>41</sup> and beyond, and recognizing its folk (and pop) use across a wide region, while communicating to a larger cross-section of the city. It also allowed for Danial to join in on vocals, presenting verses popularized in Iran as “Kamtar zan shaneh” (Brush your hair less frequently), pleading with the loved one that the singer’s heart will be lost between their curls; the Turkish version, “Böyle Gelmiş Böyle Geçer” (Easy come, easy go), also references thoughts of leaving the homeland.

An expanding Ada group repertoire brought layerings of meanings taken from a range of contexts. “Butayna may bring a song with revolutionary meaning from Morocco,” says Fares, “and we take part in discussing and arranging the music together, to learn the meaning and get the music into our bodies [*dakhil jismına*].” In the creative process of the Gaza musicians and their comrades, language and music were part of building a practice of “*sumud*, patience, and hope,” according to Ahmed, who laughs as he adds that Palestinians from Gaza have “gotten used to a difficult life.” On the bus back to Küçükçekmece from a jam in eastern Istanbul, Fares introduced his friends to songs by Turkish poet-singer Aşık Veysel. Though its poetic themes speak to melancholy life, Fares sang the refrain “Gündüz gece” ([I walk] day and night) with a smile on his face; he and Ahmed would record a late-night guitar arrangement when they were out of work during a coronavirus lockdown in December 2020. A sense of meaningful musical exploration also extended to finding elements of Turkish music that spoke to their experience. Laughter also spoke to the sardonic traditions of grassroots *sumud*-as-critique.<sup>42</sup>

Members of the group also spoke to the “language” of music as enabling communication between peoples unable to converse verbally. However, assertions of linguistic unity and “uniting people” were not, I argue, part of seeing music as a universal language free of baggage. It is telling that the group gravitated to those who shared their ideals of revolution, comradeship, and a certain rejection of themes of mass culture seen as superficial—the opposite of the “real love” they found in older examples. There was also no question of their artistic alliances including coexistence projects, either with vague ideas of Arab (or Arab-Israeli) unity that did not allow for a close critique of existing power or with the right-wing Turkish

nationalism which feted its “support” for Palestine. Nevertheless, the form of revolutionary aesthetics and organization entered into by the *shabab* reflected a kind of cosmopolitanism, taking in linguistic and regional elements stretching from Morocco to Iran. As a group, Ada presented a united front of conscious creativity. At the same time, theirs was not a “rootless cosmopolitanism.”<sup>43</sup> Comrades forming this group of organized musicians and activists were, in fact, deeply rooted in their connections to Palestine, Iran, and Morocco. Internationalism through music and political outlook were not excluded from this sense of rootedness. According to Ahmed:

Speaking about Palestine doesn’t mean playing in a particular style or tradition. The lyrics don’t have to speak directly about Palestine to be part of the Palestinian cause. I try to bring happiness to people through an enjoyable kind of music, which of course relates to Palestine.

Their views on regenerative island journeys, on language, and on the polyglot modalities of revolutionary expression formed part of an imaginative vision of Palestine connected to the optimism and obstinacy of *sumud*. Steve Salaita writes: “Palestine is real. . . . Palestine embodies a vision of equitable nationhood; it isn’t merely a conceit of international law.”<sup>44</sup> Bypassing notions of imagined nations, the “universality” of Palestine to popular struggles of the oppressed and working classes internationally, as well as the existence of Zionist colonialism acting to suppress it, Palestine is seen by Salaita as a living, breathing figure in the revolutionary imagination. For Said, Palestine was a galvanizing idea for regional struggles under “delegitimized regimes,” explicitly including Egypt and Morocco in 2003.<sup>45</sup> As an idea, Palestine gave “content and muscle” to international resistance, as both “a place to be returned to and an entirely new place,”<sup>46</sup> giving hope for a better future.

Dislocating themselves from the exploitative capitalist city, the Ada musicians sought to breathe new life into existing cultural materials, recontextualizing, altering meanings, and calling their melodies into the service of an internationalist cause represented at different stages in the lives of Kanafani, Khaled, Guevara, and Kollontai. Revolutionary dreaming builds from materialities of colonialism, proletarianization, and marginalization as migrant workers, toward liberation.

### Musical Collectivism in Times of Crisis for Turkey and Palestine

Rafidi's comments on the "identity of resistance" in times of struggle were made during a campaign discussion by Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, on the cultural directions of the national liberation movement; comrades of Ada band have organized events in Istanbul with the activists leading this discussion. As in Meari, who writes on *sumud* as a politically organized response to colonial repression in Zionist jails,<sup>47</sup> such concepts of identity are formed separately from and in opposition to individualist identity politics. By distinction, *sumud* is "never finished or fixed . . . as a revolutionary becoming" is not "an essence within the identity" of the *samid* "the one practicing *sumud*." Instead, *sumud* becomes a "continuing process" for organized self-revolutionization, actualized in practice. Amending Badiou's finding of an intersection between idea and event in the birth of the political militant, Dean highlights that comradeship becomes a "process of truth," embodied in the party, but not reducible to it.<sup>48</sup>

Reflecting on the ideal of being able to make a living from music, Ahmed comes to sobering conclusions:

We dream together that we can focus on music and do nothing else. There are so many ideas and ambitions that one life is too short to realize them. Music can make you feel at ease inside yourself but, in the final analysis, you need to be able to live securely for this to happen.

Revealing in these comments is the idea that the process of producing future directions in art is intimately connected to the materialities of living, ultimately boiling down to the bread and butter (or *za'tar wa-zeit*) questions of survival in a hostile present: the migrant musician must work to live, but in order to live, the situation has to change. Through the process of becoming comrades, of thinking through the aesthetics, contexts, and spaces through which their performance takes shape, the *shabab* enter into revolutionary becomings, with Marxist organizing and the communality of residing in a hostile *ghurba* motivating the forms of *iltizam* they come to adopt through music.

The crises that prevent the ability to "live securely" are objectified as targets of critique in reworked arrangements of traditionalized pieces.

Seeking to “make life better”—a goal linked by Ahmed to “becoming *samid*”—is not, on its own, an intrinsically political demand. Nor do such efforts evoke party organization in the individual sense. But through the shared experiences of comradeship that the musicians undertake alongside others who are party members or organizers, the tendency of *sumud*-as-critique takes aim at the colonization of Palestine and highlights the false promises of Turkish exile. This critique is embodied in musical narratives that draw on legacies of imperialist occupation and resistance in the Arab world (“Ahu da illi sar”) or capitalist greed (“Shu hal ayyam”—which became an anthem of the Lebanese Communist Party<sup>49</sup>), or reconfigurations of songs referencing migration and embodying Palestinian experience (“Raj’in ya hawa”; “Zuruni”). Heard as implicit criticism of the status quo, the Rahbani brothers’ poetry in “Raj’in ya hawa,” for example, speaks both to denials of the right of return and to a future filled with the revolutionary optimism of seeing certainty in victory:

We bid one age farewell  
 And embark on another  
 Forgotten by the land of forgetfulness  
 We say that we’re leaving  
 Though the truth is we’re returning.

In live versions, the Ada group captures the sense of *farah*/joy heard in the contributions of other musicians from Gaza in the previous chapter. As a generation “forgotten” in the post-Oslo impasse and abject failure of Palestine’s leaders to negotiate a just settlement, Fares says that the group of comrades share affiliations in politics and music, adding that he sees Palestinian musicians as “capable of a higher level of *sumud*,” having played through the hard times and the good. With the crisis of leadership unresolved, the acts of maintaining morale among the younger generation of refugees should not be underestimated, nor should the power to voice popular sentiment in choruses of solidarity.

Echoing Sol bandmate Said Fadel on the difficulties of “going it alone” in Gaza, narrating the processes involved in music making among the group in Istanbul also reveals the basic economic necessities of sticking together—the gigging circuit for Arabs in the city is seen as easier to navigate in groups; where they have worked in other sectors of the informal

economy, Arabic-speaking contacts are often a way in. But, beyond migrant survivalism, the collectivity voiced by Fares and Ahmed lays claim to revolutionary tradition, encompassing the repertoire itself, its organization, and through conscious separation and reimaginings of the stresses of the city. Varying musical aesthetics are ascribed new meaning during this journey, with Fairuz, Turkish folk, and a spectrum of transregional stylings explored in performance, drawing out deeper associations with Palestinian and migrant experience. The aesthetic flexibilities of the musicians bring repertoire into their own context, demanding its service in the path of social and national liberation.

*Shabab* assertions on the *sumud* of Palestinian musicians chime with Jibril's claim that Palestinians were "ready" to smash the pyramids of regional paralysis before others, again evoking the "different values" found in grassroots histories of Gaza. Referencing earlier socialities in their familial exile in Gaza, a developing political consciousness brought the Ada and Sol groups into exilic closeness, while enveloping other Palestinian, migrant, and leftist actors in their orbit. Coming from a regional and international center of resistance, where communality has shaped popular history, their road of travel is away from individualized voicings of *sumud* toward group expression. Ahmed's 2017 recording of "Ana mawgud" is essentially a solo version. While the song could already be said to have collectivized the *ana* ("I" or "me"), through its wider use as a liberal anthem against autocracy, Ahmed's closer association with band projects in the period since performs a further rupture, dissolving *ana* into *ihna* ("we"). The never-finished *iltizam* of musical comradeship meant that crises of the political and economic spheres in Palestine, Turkey, and the wider world could only be resolved collectively.



# Conclusion: Where to?

## On Music's Meanings, Journeys, and Appropriabilities

My love, oh traveler, where to? Ramallah.

**H**ailing from a farming family in Kafr 'Ain village, north of Ramallah, Britain-based engineer and barbecue enthusiast Muhammad dreams of being back in the land. Full of stories of the difficulties of traversing a Jordanian–Israeli border system, and visa bureaucracy, he is also an avid music listener: from Palestinian folk and Sabah Fakhri to Irish music. Talking one night before his annual Ramadan hiatus, he made a compelling point about the oft-played “Wein ‘a-Ramallah,” a song appearing in fieldwork for many of the chapters in this book and based on themes of departure and loss. According to my friend’s logic, in the post-Oslo period, when the PA has given up on Jerusalem and built its de facto capital around its Ramallah fiefdom, the elevation of “Wein ‘a-Ramallah” over songs about Jerusalem reinforces the privileged position of a Ramallah-based elite. Muhammad laughs that “I think I’m against this song actually,” adding that “Ramallah has no historical or political significance.”

On Ramallah’s undistinguished past, historian Nur Masalha agrees; in his own epic work, Ramallah features only scantily,<sup>1</sup> a quiet village among more prominent towns and cities. Few songs were dedicated to it. However, forced migration to Ramallah after 1948 swelled its diversity and accelerated its evolution from village to city.<sup>2</sup> Coming from a family exiled from Yafa, Raja Shehadeh witnessed cultural diversity and social solidarity in his childhood in this refugee town. Palestine is itself a place of exile. “Wein ‘a-Ramallah” transcended its traditional use as a love song, and become a song of physical, propulsive movement. For those pushed further beyond, a song of return.

Ramallah's modern history works its way into music too. Samir Joubran dedicated the solo *oud* piece "Ramallah August 10" to "one of many unfortunate episodes" witnessed by the city during the second intifada<sup>3</sup>—referring to the 2001 bombing of PA police headquarters by Israeli planes, preceding the full-scale invasion of the city. The city is revealingly higher in the iconography of main PA party Fatah, including the song "Ya rayih 'a-Ramallah," which paints its late leader Yasser Arafat as a revolutionary martyr.

Shehadeh finds post-Oslo Ramallah a bubble of real estate, commercialism, Israeli apartheid walls, and officialized indifference, a far cry from the town he knew.<sup>4</sup> There are glaring inequalities and contradictions at the heart of a neocolonial project that has made Ramallah home to luxury hotels and three music conservatoires, a false oasis under occupation, adjacent to camps swelling with poverty. Despite all of this—and its inaccessibility to millions of refugees and nearly all of the musicians in this book—this cosmopolitan center is also a place of protest against all that the colonizer and pliant Palestinian leaders have stood for. One example is seen in "Wein 'a-Ramallah" festival protests against singer Yacoub Shaheen's performances in front of PA "security" forces after their assassination of Nizar Banat in June 2021. Shannon's argument that music and the arts are arenas of great debate<sup>5</sup> finds urgency in Palestinian dispossession.

For Palestinian musicians across the region and internationally, "Wein 'a-Ramallah" is a staple, part of a standardized repertoire across region and distance. But, like other songs and pieces, its meanings diverge in place and context: in Lebanon, "home" of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians forgotten by the PA, it functions as a standard, played at commemorations, protests, and weddings, and as a first, basic, *maqam bayat* melody learned by instrumentalists. In as close proximity as possible to the homeland, *shabab* find solace and optimism in the idea that they, like the late novelist and poet Mourid Barghouti, would one day see Ramallah in the flesh.

Muhammad's criticism finds voice in grassroots musical responses to PA functionalism, further highlighting the mutability of song meanings in time and place. Vocalist Rola Azar performed in Manchester in March 2019, brought by a local Palestinian community association. Before the drawn-out ceremonial introductions and certificates to affiliated businessmen,

an audio recording of the PA anthem, “Fida’i,” was played as the room stood, with a few of the 100-ish attendees joining in with the words. Palestinian ambassador Husam Zomlot gave a speech, promising that Gaza, Jerusalem, and Ramallah would be liberated parts of a Palestinian state. The irony was not missed on the band of ’48 Palestinians that Rola’s hometown of Nazareth was missing from the rallying cry. Equally revealing, however, was the rapturous response received by Rola’s rendition of alternative anthem “Mawtini,” which had the crowd on its feet singing. This musical moment of crowd leading by Palestinians forgotten by the PA was suggestive of the role that they had come to play in the May 2021 uprising and after.

### Instruments and Aesthetics of Liberation

The song examples above express the continuing truth of claims that Palestinian music is primarily vocal, poetically based, and orally transmitted.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, many of the non-native aesthetics brought into play by the musicians discussed have come via word-based forms, whether through *turath*, via the seemingly ever-present Fairuz, or artists as diverse as Pink Floyd and Tupac Shakur. The stories here only scratch the surface of the musical and physical traversals of Palestinian exiles in the region; there is much more to be told of experiences in Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and many other locations whose situations have faced the shudderings of history. Or, like the fleeting Kofia band encounter with postrevolutionary Iran, having the power to tell more than their temporal and experimental transience.<sup>7</sup>

I have argued in this book that developing musical dialects and communal relationships has served to challenge situations of systemic crisis identified by Kanafani’s Marxist analysis through emancipatory approaches to tradition and renovation and alternative visions for liberation. The works of artists centered in this project show instrumental music to be no less imbued with meaning than vocal forms. In some cases, this has meant approaches to aesthetic production that nationalize features of international influence in places of regional Palestinian exile. The reappropriation by Palestinian refugees of instruments such as the Scottish bagpipe, electric guitar, or keyboard are no less significant than revolutionary appropriations taking place at a grassroots level elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> What is notable in the Palestinian case is the collective spirit of liberation, which

directly addresses and challenges displacement and underdevelopment, forcing ongoing Palestinian exile into the spotlight. The stories at the heart of these experiences speak to space offered, denied, and reclaimed, with sometimes extreme repression serving only to incubate and impel creative responses. If national and regional insurrection provided the catalyst for the cosmopolitan revolutionary works of Sabreen and Tamer Abu Ghazaleh in different periods, the vitality of new strands of radical musicianship once again comes to the fore in twenty-first-century struggle.

Palestinian displacement helps us to expand on Massad's view of the simultaneously productive and repressive cultural effects of colonialism.<sup>9</sup> Colonial exile represses an organic connection to national tradition after the fact of the dislocating effects of the Nakba on Palestinian social life, while periods of reaction in host countries have targeted refugee mobilization. At the same time, experiences of dispersal have produced an array of imaginative politicized responses through music, whether through breeding connections to other schools of Arab musicality, by exposure to global sounds through dissemination of cassettes, or reconfiguring meanings carried in earlier songs.

As shown in much of the chapter material, revolutionary organization coincides with and propels collective creativity. Palestinian music is sounded to ongoing resistance and has embodied *iltizam* in novel ways. Challenging the highbrow and apolitical associations of *tarab*, for instance, young musicians in Gaza have presented material from Egypt's Golden Age alongside revolutionary anthems and chronicles of youth, recontextualizing and reorienting musical meaning under Israeli blockade. In Lebanon, Bahaa Joumaa picked up the *nai*, convinced that traditional song could benefit from *maqam* expertise. Speaking about Palestine through music, says Ahmed Haddad, does not imply attachment to a singular genre.

It is an underlying claim here that many of the approaches and narratives discussed implicitly critique "liberal" modalities of genre and instrumentalism. Approaches to *maqam* such as those emphasized in the *dakhil* treat land connections as one way of disrupting the concept of "silent" music. Speaking to a whole range of aesthetic approaches, Saied Silbak calls out: "all resistance acts are needed." Or as fellow *oud* player Reem Anbar boldly claims, "I am Palestine." Part of this rallying cry sees the reembrace of indigenous tradition as standing up to normalization, wary of Zionist attempts to claim ownership of Middle East music, alongside attempts to

erase the Palestinians from history. Addressing the Arab regional crisis, Leila Khaled and Ghassan Kanafani called for a revolutionary instrument of social transformation, inspired by seismic victories in Cuba and Vietnam. As in Dean's conceptualization of the comrade, these Marxist thinkers point forward to paths of socialist organization and anti-imperialist struggle.

### Facing the Music: *Sumud*-as-Critique

Oh guards, listen if you please  
 To what we have to say  
 Regale us with an air whose prevention was a sin  
 I swear to God that I have not forgotten  
 the suffering of my land.  
 —NAJIB AL-RAYES, "YA ZALAM AL-SIJN KHAYYIM" (OH DARKNESS  
 OF THE PRISON OVER US)

Embedded within displaced populations, and largely without the support of mainstream music industries or NGO funders, performers have faced many of the same problems as the Palestinian people as a whole. Expelled from their lands by Zionist forces in 1948, the social fabric of historic Palestine was torn apart, yet musical stories of hardship or resistance precede the Nakba and traverse later borders.<sup>10</sup> Singing about the Safar Barlik—the punitive Ottoman military conscription across Bilad al-Sham in 1913–18—Sanaa Moussa vocalizes earlier displacements:

Oh mother, bid me goodbye before I leave  
 You know not where I go as I am scattered.

Since British and Israeli colonization, musicians and other artists within and outside Palestine have met state violence and war, imprisonment and torture, further displacement and a whole range of machinery set into motion by imperialist support for a Zionist state. At the time of writing, dancer and choreographer Ata Khattab is one of around 4,650 political prisoners in Israeli jails.<sup>11</sup> However, the campaign for his release has not halted the work of his comrades in El-Funoun, who have staged a new production and completed a new album in his absence.<sup>12</sup> The message is that those captured as Palestinians-in-*sumud* only spur on the

struggle on the outside, while joining a collective fight in prison. At the sharp edge of a confrontation which means physical and collective displacement, Palestinians are imprisoned for their politics in regions much wider than those I have documented, whether mass detention in Saudi Arabia,<sup>13</sup> or British-occupied Ireland, where Issam Hijjawi was arrested in August 2020 and incarcerated for 15 months.

As Nooshin notes, music is meant to be “above all (usually) a pleasurable experience.”<sup>14</sup> This is shown in Palestinian wedding traditions and in the celebration, and in the *farah* or joy found through shared performance in trying times. That music is meaningful is also expressed by the oppressors’ wielding of its affective power, with music and white noise forming part of the systematic armory of the torture techniques employed by the state. The sonic arsenal of the Zionist Shabak agency has included extremes of volume—white noise as well as Israeli and modernist European music—and other “sounds and songs whose meaning and melody you do not know,”<sup>15</sup> used in sleep deprivation and psychological disorientation,<sup>16</sup> expanding techniques developed by imperialism in Ireland,<sup>17</sup> at U.S.-occupied Guantánamo,<sup>18</sup> Abu Ghraib, and other notorious locations of war and internment.

The ability of *asra* (singular *asir*), or political prisoners, to withstand such conditions is a key strand of *sumud*, destabilizing colonial power.<sup>19</sup> Showing the dedication of *asra* toward creative *sumud*, musician Fida’ al-Sha’ir from occupied Golan was banned from having an *oud* in prison,<sup>20</sup> and so spent over a month crafting an instrument out of chess sets, broom handles, and wooden crates, even managing to smuggle in strings. Zionist jailers found and confiscated the *oud* and subjected his comrade poet Walid Daqqa to punishment and torture after he claimed its ownership.<sup>21</sup>

Music is at the center of collective self-organization and appears almost at every step in the journey of a Palestinian *asir*, further revealing how genres, narratives, and space are utilized by the displaced. Jailed in 2003, Asim al-Ka’abi, born in Balata refugee camp to parents from Yafa, would remain imprisoned for the next eighteen years. Dispersed through all but one of Israel’s jails, he reports that the *asra* see internment as a “school of revolution,” with songs such as “Ya zalam al-sijn khayyim” and “Ya Naqab kuni irada” appearing on days of political action on the inside.<sup>22</sup> Denied access to modern recordings, *asra* relied on cassettes, and learned songs memorized by newer arrivals.

In 2017, Asim's comrades at Dheisheh camp in Bethlehem recorded a song demanding his freedom. Beginning with a *mawwal* vocal over synthesized flute, the vocalist calls out to Asim's heroism, before a chorus pledges allegiance to joining his fight.

We people of the camps are distinguished  
 Our hearts together, we feel the pain of one another . . .  
 Oh mother, we were raised on loving kindness  
 despite the blood falling as tears  
 We promise, oh Asim al-Ka'abi, you will return to our friendship  
 Wallah, we'll sing and bid you *marhaba*  
 and welcome you back to our land

Oh banners of the people [PFLP], hold them highest of all  
 Asim al-Ka'abi spoke and we answered the call.

While Asim remained behind bars, hundreds gathered at a function hall in the village of Jifna to celebrate his engagement to Sumoud Saadat, dancing and singing along to the song "17 October," celebrating the operation which assassinated right-wing Israeli politician Rehavam Ze'evi in 2001, in retaliation for the murder of PFLP secretary general Abu Ali Mustafa. As Asim was released from Israeli custody on April 22, 2021, a waiting crowd clapped and sang "Jaina, jaina," (We have come), a groom's welcome, as *zagharit* filled the air. In the evening, the street party thrown in his honor featured heroic leftist songs.<sup>23</sup> The recorded and live examples above were simple, featuring unison voices, and based around synthesized aesthetics developed by Shafiq Kabha in the 1980s.<sup>24</sup> Similar production values accompanied songs dedicated to the Lions' Den, emerging as a major resistance force in 2022. The musicians are rarely mentioned by name and the songs are largely without known authors.

For musicians in this book, *sumud* is vocally interpreted in many ways, including as optimism through the pain of loss (Reem Kelani), a sense of female empowerment through political singing (Umm Ali, Rawan Okasha), artistic spirit built up by boycotting Israeli institutions (Saied Silbak), in asserting Palestine's existence through music (Ahmad Al Khatib, Reem Anbar), and enduring conditions of social crisis (Tamer Abu Ghazaleh, Ahmed Haddad). *Sumud* is conceptualized as keeping alive narratives of

land, carrying the hope and ingenuity of the masses, and in the leading role played by women in its transmission.

Voiced in the context of an impasse in the national liberation movement, and drawing on earlier oral histories, I have outlined the significance of what I label “*sumud*-as-critique,” or the incisiveness of grassroots analyses, which tease out the contradictions in the status quo, unsparingly criticizing bourgeois leaders, collaborators, host countries, social conservatives, and foreign-funded NGOs. Placing such critiques alongside the class analysis of Kanafani, Leila Khaled, and Naji al-Ali situates the musicians’ criticism in a global context, pointing to the revolutionary potential of voices from below.

Edward Said saw critique and “broad popular participation” as the alternative to a deceptive “peace process,” with the potential to open a new path regionally, and asked:

How can we repeat the tragic course of the Arab countries, in which national unity and a state of permanent emergency have been used as a cover for sustained dictatorship, total corruption, and mediocrity, plus more and more losses to Israel?<sup>25</sup>

The *sumud* voiced in the stories of Palestinian exile musicians urges toward a different kind of national unity, as shown in chapter 1 in the exchange between the Kelani family and the *zajjal*, who instinctively welcomed the Palestinians back from Kuwait. Taking place before the official trashing of the right of refugees to return, or the elevation of Ramallah to capital of the “nonstate of Palestine,”<sup>26</sup> the *sumud* of this *zajjal* figure is present in the grassroots narratives of other musicians, based on collectivity across borders of dispersal and running counter to a post-Oslo process that sidelines refugees and individualizes resistance.

Relating the stories in this book to prison struggles is not a digression, but a recognition that Palestinians-in-*sumud* remain at the center of resistance, challenging their own displacement, destabilizing the regime on the inside, and exposing the failures of negotiations and regional elites claiming to stand for their liberation. Music indexes broader phenomena. Members of the pro-Palestine band Grup Yorum, for instance, have died behind the bars of Turkish prisons, while performances of members outside are banned in Turkey and Europe. In regions engulfed in crisis and



polarization, musicians are the pulse. At the time of writing, there is intensified protest around the Sheikh Jarrah area of Jerusalem, where Zionist colonization threatens the homes of an entire Palestinian community; in July 2022, this situation, allied to a lack of funding for grassroots Palestinian culture, led to the closure of the historic Sabreen studio.

The tendency of music and art to raise questions is, I believe, linked to grassroots *sumud*-as-critique: “Ila mata?” (“Until when?”; Rima Nasir Tarzi); “‘Ala fein?” (“Where to?”; Sabreen); “Wa-ba‘dein!?” (“And then what?”; Saied Silbak); “Li-wein bruh?” (“Where can I go?”; Mohammed Assaf). Painting after the infamous Lydda death march of 1948, Palestinian artist Ismail Shammout named his 1953 work *Ila ayna?*, which also translates as “Where to?” His work would later relate to the rising national liberation movement, but here, immediately after the Nakba, was bleakness. Unlike the closed-formula question which points to a PA “nonstate” as the destination, these questions are open-ended, eliciting debate, or formulating demands.

As in the exploration of “Wein ‘a-Ramallah” above, the critique of many Palestinians often leads back to a crisis of leadership, with the Oslo generation of Fatah leaders ostensibly representing their opposition to Israeli colonization. Indeed, the very existence of hundreds of thousands of refugees near to Palestine—and thousands of political prisoners closer to home—acts as an inconvenient reminder that the “sword and neck” strategy of negotiations critiqued by Kanafani was doomed to fail the masses.

At a 2012 new year festival in Arafat Square, Ramallah, PA police stormed the stage as the Turab band led by Basel Zayed were performing, offended by the group’s singing of “Dawleh,” a satirical song questioning the UN statehood bid of the PA as a meaningless gesture amid intensified Zionist land grabs. Artist Hafiz Omar posterized Basel singing, in black and white with a red cross over his lips, reading “Don’t press mute.” Trained classically under Ahmad Al Khatib at the National Conservatory, Basel’s group presented their music through *oud*, *qanun*, and traditional percussion. While ridiculing the “statehood” campaign of bourgeois Palestinians amid Zionist colonization of the West Bank, its lyrics imagined a state without prisons, with social security, and open doors.

The sentiments expressed in Basel’s work were counterpoints to grassroots anthems like “Mawtini,” “Leve Palestina,” “17 October,” and many others standing starkly in the face of the officialized rigmarole of PA “diplomacy” and outright repression. Even the seemingly apolitical are

enlisted: Fairuz's "love song" "Raj'in ya hawa" as a song of return, and the instrumental messages of "Ghurba" and "Wa-ba'dein?!?" *Sumud*-as-critique is expressive of mass disaffection and revolutionary potential.

### Music and Resistance: From the River to the Sea

In July 2021, the band Darbet Shams (Sunstroke) took to the green lands around Haifa to film a song that had been in their set a couple of years, energized by performing resistance music on the streets of the *dakhil* during the May 18 strike (figure 15). Fronted by vocalist Hanan Wakim, the group sang in unison to an up-tempo lullaby dedicated to the niece of songwriter Samer Asakli.

Fly high, oh dove, over Bilad al-Sham  
Wipe Sykes-Picot off the map  
Before Bissan grows up.

A traditionally framed melody in *maqam hijaz* enables repetition, with occasional *oud* breaks by Samer, as acoustic guitar, electric bass, and drum kit keep the groove. The group smiles throughout the performance. After the 1948 expulsion of the majority of its Palestinians, contemporary



15. "Wipe Sykes-Picot off the Map"; Darbet Shams in Haifa, July 2021. Video still.

practices of urbicide in Haifa mean that Palestine is “eliminated in memory,” according to Yara Hawari, and Palestinians are “limited in all spheres of political, social and economic life” by Zionist exclusivity.<sup>27</sup> Revolutionary songwriter Nuh Ibrahim, poet Rashid Hussein, and *fida’iya* Leila Khaled were born in Haifa’s vicinity, and the majority of its indigenous descendants blocked from returning include the families of Tarek Salhia and Reem Anbar; conversely ’48 Palestinians like Darbet Shams are barred from visiting Ramallah.

Where many Palestinian artists and poets had asked questions through their work, Darbet Shams offered a radical solution, pinpointing the modern tribulations not just of Palestine but of a wider region suffering the legacy of Sykes–Picot,<sup>28</sup> Balfour, and ongoing imperialism. Responding in 1967 to the proposal of Egyptian journalist Ahmed Baha al-Din for a Palestinian state in Gaza, the West Bank and Jordan, Kanafani countered with a call for a liberated Palestine to become the “centerpiece of the archway,” for “new relationships” between Arab peoples, and solutions based on the resistance of “the fighting people.”<sup>29</sup> Far from being solely regionalist, these ideas drew back to inspiration from revolutionary struggles in Cuba, Vietnam, Algeria, China, and Russia, and prophetically critiqued later Palestinian compromises. Asakli and his musical comrades draw explicitly on Kanafani and Guevara, and position themselves within historic waves of resistance, where the nationalism of the oppressed meets socialist visions of the future, throwing up rebellious, anti-imperialist cultural works.

Carried in the lyrics to this concise song is the realization that the colonial displacement and fragmentation of peoples is ultimately unsustainable if people fight back. This book has only hinted at the enforced migration suffered for a second or third time by Palestinian refugees, and by millions more. Performing revolutionary demands, a traditionalized melody vocalizes poetic urgency of building a counterattack, while instruments of the Arab world are blended seamlessly with others associated with transatlantic pop. Given political content, musical internationalism becomes the vitalized, radical flip side of cosmopolitanism. If reading Che Guevara in Palestine constitutes a radical alternative to liberal acceptance of the PA’s inability to confront Zionist colonialism, as Meari suggests,<sup>30</sup> playing and singing contribute to this trembling indignation at injustice. Here, at the meeting points of internationalism, *sumud*, and critique, Palestinian music imagines a region and a world free from the

barbarism threatened by this historic age. Liberating Palestine means facing imperialism, and with it the whole edifice of the problem, head on.

With the hills of colonized Palestine in the background, young musicians threaten Sykes-Picot with collective determination to prove Kana-fani right, in predicting greatness “born from the rubble of defeat, like a volcano born from under the cold ashes of a forsaken mountain.”<sup>31</sup> Or, as the reverbed voice of George Kirmiz once sang:

Let's go, oh lovers of the land  
And finish this journey.



# Glossary

- bashraf* (pl. *basharif*): instrumental form inherited from Ottoman music
- Bilad al-Sham: geographical region encompassing Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan
- buzuq*: long-necked, steel-stringed folk instrument played in Bilad al-Sham
- dabke*: traditional dance associated with Palestinian weddings
- Al-Dakhil: The “inside” of historic Palestine, colonized within the borders of the Israeli state
- fellah* (pl. *fellahin*): peasant or farmer
- fida’i* (pl. *fida’yin*): Guerrilla or armed fighter
- firqa* (pl. *firqat*): band or ensemble, traditionally comprising eight or more instruments
- ghurba*: place of exile, denoting estrangement
- girbeh* (pl. *girab*): bagpipes, referring sometimes to European varieties
- hizb* (pl. *ahzab*): political party
- iltizam*: “commitment” to a cause or viewpoint
- intifada*: literally a “shuddering,” referring to a political uprising
- iqā’* (pl. *iqā’at*): rhythmic mode
- jabha* (pl. *jabhat*): “front” or party
- lahja* (pl. *lahajat*): dialect or spoken language of a region
- longa* (pl. *longat*): musical form deriving from Turkish/Eastern European tradition
- maqam* (pl. *maqamat*): scalar or modal system in Arab music theory. *Maqamat* are frequently referred to in naming the musical mode around which a piece is built, eg. *maqam ‘ajam*, *bayati*, *nahawand*, and so on
- maqluba*: an “upside down” dish of rice, aubergine, and other ingredients
- mawwal*: semi-improvised vocal form dating from the twelfth century, now usually used as a sung, nonrhythmic introduction on themes of longing
- mijwiz*: double-reed pipe played in traditional musics in Bilad al-Sham and Egypt
- mujaddara*: dish of rice, lentils, and fried onions

- muwashshah* (pl. *muwashshahat*): Arabic poetic form with reported origins in al-Andalus, appearing as a musical form from seventeenth-century Aleppo
- nai*: end-blown reed flute in Arab and Turkish music traditions
- Nakba*: the “catastrophe” of 1948 and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine by Zionist forces toward the creation of an Israeli state
- Naksa*: the “setback” of 1967, with the defeat of Arab forces and the Zionist conquest of Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Sinai, Golan Heights and Shebaa’ Farms.
- org*: Arabized electric keyboard, adapted for *maqam* tuning
- oud*: predominant stringed instrument and ancestor to European lute
- qasida* (pl. *qasa’id*): a classical form of Arabic poetry
- qanun*: horizontally plucked instrument with around seventy-eight strings
- riqq*: tambourine-shaped frame drum
- rafiq/a* (m/f; pl. *rifaq/rafiqat*): comrade or companion
- sama’i* (pl. *sama’iyat*): compositional form built from Ottoman traditions of *saz sama’i*, around a ten-beat metric cycle, based in a particular *maqam*
- shabab* (sing. *shab*): young people
- sha’bi*: “popular” or “of the people,” referring to cultural or political ideas associated with the working classes
- sumud*: steadfastness, a tactic of resistance or defiance to colonialism
- tabla* (or *darabukka*): goblet-shaped hand drum
- takht*: small ensemble of up to five players, popularized in early twentieth-century Egyptian music
- tanbur*: snareless side drum
- taqasim/taqsim*: *maqam*-based instrumental improvisation traditionally used as interludes between vocal pieces and later developed as a solo genre
- tar*: single-headed frame drum
- tarab*: a state of ecstasy or enchantment conjured by experience of music; it sometimes refers to the repertoire of *maqam* musicianship
- tatriz*: traditional embroidery appearing on *thobs* (dresses) and other fabrics
- thawra*: revolution or revolt; *thawri*, or “revolutionary,” also sometimes refers to protest songs
- turath*: “heritage” as national customs in culture
- ustadh/a* (m/f; pl. *asatidha*): esteemed teacher or figure in music transmission
- wasla*: suite of musical pieces based in a single *maqam*
- watani*: nationalist, patriotic; connected to Palestinian national liberation
- yarghoul/arghoul*: longer version of the *mijwiz*
- zaffa* (pl. *zaffat*): traditional wedding procession
- zagharit*: lit. “ululations,” or vocal trilling sound associated with women’s wedding song
- zajjal* (pl. *zajjalin*): poet-singer of rurally based *zajal* music in colloquial language, and master of ceremonies in archetypal weddings
- za’tar*: dried thyme mixture, blended with olive oil (*zeit*) as a staple of local cooking

# Notes

## Introduction

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2. S. Marwan, "The Struggle of the Oppressed of the World," *al-Hadaf* magazine, July 22, 1972 (Beirut).
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7. Ibrahim Nassar, "From Ottomans to Arabs," in *The Storyteller of Jerusalem: The Life and Times of Wasif Jawhariyyeh, 1904–1948*, edited by Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch, 2014), xxxix.
8. See Eddie Abrahams, "Imperialism Plans to Bury the Revolution," in *The New Warlords: From the Gulf War to the Recolonisation of the Middle East* (London: Larkin, 1994), 86; Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 214; and Manal Massalha, "In Suspension: The Denial of the Right to the City for Palestinians in Israel," PhD diss., SOAS, London, 2014, 38.



9. Joseph A. Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 7.
10. Quotes in this section from a conversation with the author, December 2020.
11. For more on Kirmiz's journey, see Issa Boulos and Louis Brehony, "The 'Disappearance' of George Kirmiz," *Palestine Chronicle*, October 13, 2022, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/the-disappearance-of-george-kirmiz-unravelling-a-palestinian-musical-mystery/>.
12. Conversation with the author, June 2021.
13. Since "Beljiki" (Belgian) had by this point become a xenophobic term levied at Palestinians in Jordan, the identity of the songwriter is rather clouded.
14. Various, *Palestine: Music of the Intifada* (UK: Venture VE 29, 1989; vinyl record).
15. "Handala" (Italy, 1990; unlabelled cassette).
16. Oliver Holmes and Sufian Taha, "Ahed Tamimi: 'I Am a Freedom Fighter. I Will Not Be the Victim,'" *The Guardian*, July 30, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/30/ahed-tamimi-i-am-a-freedom-fighter-i-will-not-be-the-victim-palestinian-israel>.
17. Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 101.
18. Brehony, *Kofia*.
19. Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 107.
20. Lila Abu Lughod, "Transnational Politics and Feminist Inquiries," interviewed by Basuli Deb, *Postcolonial Text* 7, no. 1 (2012), <https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/1287/1293>.
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26. Ghassan Kanafani, *Umm Sa'd* (Limassol, Cyprus: Rimal, 2013 [1969]), 72; *'A'id ila Haifa* (Limassol, Cyprus: Rimal, 2013 [1969]), 79.
27. On the same album, Sheikh Imam sings in praise of Vietnamese anti-imperialism. Sheikh Imam, *Ayoun al-Kalam / Les yeux des mots* (France: Le Chante Du Monde LDX 74543, 1976; vinyl record).

28. Timothy Brennan, *Pieces of Mind: A Life of Edward Said* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 112, 146. See also Said on BBC *Hardtalk*, September 11, 2002, interviewed by Tim Sebastian.
29. Tahrir Hamdi, *Imagining Palestine: Cultures of Exile and National Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2023), 44.
30. Various artists, *Palestine Lives! Songs from the Struggle of the People of Palestine*, Paredon P-1022, 1974.
31. Issa Boulos, "Negotiating the Elements: Palestinian Freedom Songs from 1967 to 1987," in *Palestinian Music and Song: Expression and Resistance since 1900*, ed. Moshil Kanaaneh et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 62.
32. Naji al-Ali, *Karikatur Naji al-Ali, 1985–87* (Lebanon: Beirut, Dar al-Farabi, 2012), 103. Named after the *hanthāl*, a bitter tasting plant native to Palestine, al-Ali's rag-wearing Handala appears in thousands of the artist's caricatures, almost always facing the scene, his back to the viewer. Among the many symbolic evocations of his name, Handala lends his name to a prominent Palestinian prisoner solidarity association in the occupied lands.
33. Maureen O'Rourke, "The Experience of Exile in Modern Arab Poetry," PhD diss., SOAS, London, 2009, 148.
34. Correspondence with the author, August 2019.
35. Kofia, "Demonstrationssången / Tahya Falastin" (Demonstration song / Free Palestine) on *Ard Biladi* (Sweden: Plattlangarna KOFIA-2, 1979; vinyl record).
36. Multi-instrumentalist and president of the al-Kamandjati conservatoire Ramzi Abu Radwan is presented in European media as the boy who renounced violence to embrace the violin. See Rachel Beckles Willson, *Orientalism and Musical Mission: Palestine and the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 286.
37. See, for example, Marion Lecoquierre, "Hebron: Challenging the Urbicide," in *Routledge Handbook on Middle East Cities*, ed. Haim Yacobi and Mansour Nasasra (London: Routledge, 2020), 320; Nili Belkind, *Music in Conflict: Palestine, Israel and the Politics of Aesthetic Production* (London: Routledge, 2021), 204.
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39. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed., *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 194–97.
40. Yasmin Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migration and Postnational Membership in Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Bassma Kodmani-Darwish, "La question des réfugiés et l'émergence d'une diaspora palestinienne," *Confluences méditerranéennes* 9 (Winter 1994): 53–60.
41. Edward Said, *After the Last Sky* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 115.
42. Said, *After the Last Sky*, 115.
43. Hamid Dabashi, "On Nations without Borders," in Bayat and Herrera, *Global Middle East: Into the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 60–73.

44. Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 3 (Spring 1984): 27–48.
45. Ghassan Kanafani, "Richard Carleton Interview," Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Beirut, 1970. According to the interviewer's son James Carleton, this interview for ABC may never have actually been broadcast by the network, and was released for the first time in October 2016 when found in a dusty box in the family garage. Conversation with the author, January 2023.
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47. S. Marwan, "Tribute to Kanafani," in *The 1936–39 Revolt in Palestine*, by G. Kanafani (New York: Committee for a Democratic Palestine 1972; London: Tricontinental Society, 1980), 65.
48. Ghassan Kanafani, *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, vol. 5 (Limassol, Cyprus: Rimal, 2015).
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52. I follow El Said, Meari, and Pratt in questioning use of this term, which they also place in quotation marks; Maha El Said, Lena Meari, and Nicola Pratt, eds., *Rethinking Gender in Revolutions and Resistance: Lessons from the Arab World* (London: Zed Books, 2015), 2.
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56. Kanafani, "al-Marksiya" (written in 1970), in *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 94.
57. "al-Muqawama hiya al-asl," in *al-Dirasat*, 484.
58. Kanafani. "Hawla qadiyyat Abu Hamidu wa qadaya al-ta'amul al-i'lami wa-l-thaqafi ma' al-'adu," in *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 510.
59. Kanafani. "Hawla qadiyyat Abu Hamidu wa-qadaya al-ta'amul al-i'lami wa-l-thaqafi ma' al-'adu," in *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 510.
60. Leila Khaled, *My People Shall Live: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), 28–41.
61. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 70.
62. Ó Ruairc traces this contradiction via Said's reading of Foucault, seeing knowledge as preceding power. For Said, orientalism is not a postcolonization justification, which marks, for Ó Ruairc, "a shift from a materialist explanation

- to a culturalist one.” Liam Ó Ruairc, *Edward W. Said as Critical Intellectual* (Beau Bassin, Mauritius, 2020), 48.
63. Brennan makes the point that, although Edward Said attacked Marx in *Orientalism* (for which he faced the critique of Syrian Marxist Sadiq al-Azm), his readings of Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire* give the “opposite impression” (*Pieces of Mind*, 265). Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
  64. Edward W. Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward Said* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 141–42.
  65. Edward W. Said, “On Repetition,” in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 123.
  66. Rosemary Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2007), 147.
  67. Gurhpal Singh, “A Victim Diaspora? The Case of the Sikhs,” *Diaspora* 8, no. 3 (Winter 1999): 293–307.
  68. Abu Lughod, “Transnational Politics.”
  69. Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of a Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 89.
  70. Palestinian literary and cultural material captured by Zionist forces in 1948 and after remains under restricted access in Israeli state archives, as documented in the Benny Brunner film *The Great Book Robbery* (2911 Foundation and Al Jazeera, 2012).
  71. Beckles Willson records the missionaries’ attempts at collecting Palestinian songs, including the 1901 Palastinischer Diwan, collected and edited by German theologian and linguist Gustav Dalman. See Beckles Wilson, *Orientalism and Musical Mission: Palestine and the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 31–46.
  72. Abdelatif al-Bargouthi, *Anthology of Palestinian Dal’una* (Birzeit: Birzeit University, 1990), 11.
  73. Dirgham Hanna Sbait, *Songs of the Fedayeen* (London: Bellman Bookshop, 1970); Abdelatif al-Bargouthi, *Encyclopedia of Intifada Folklore* (Birzeit: Birzeit University, 1998).
  74. Saud al-Asadi, *Aghani min al-Jalil* (Nazareth: al-Hakim Press, 1976).
  75. Mun’im Haddad, “Orientalism, Zionism and the Palestinian Folk Heritage,” in *Palestinian Folk Heritage: Roots and Challenges*, ed. A. Abu Hodaba (Palestine: Taibeh Center for the Revival of Arab Heritage, 1991); Mun’im Haddad, “The Relationship of Orientalism to Palestinian Folklore,” in *Folk Heritage of Palestine*, ed. S. K. Kanaana (Palestine: Taibeh Center for the Revival of Arab Heritage, 1994).
  76. J. N. Khoury, “Ya Zarif al-Tool: A Palestinian Folkloric Song,” *Al-Karmil: Studies in Arabic Language and Literature* 20 (1999): 97–127.
  77. See Na’ilah Libbis, *Women’s Folklore Songs for Engagement and Weddings* (Nazareth: Arabic Culture Circle, 1989); Fadwa Younis, *Min al-aghani al-nisa’iya al-sha’biya wa-qul al-sitt Badriya*.

78. This traditional form is defined by improvised sung poetry, usually between one *hadi* poet-singer and a large crowd, using call-and-response techniques.
79. See Dirgham Hanna Sbait, "Debate in the Improvised-Sung Poetry of the Palestinians," *Asian Folklore Studies* 52, no. 1 (1993): 93–117.
80. El-Funoun, "Zaghareed" notes, (USA: Sounds True STA M109D, 1999; CD album).
81. A selection of material from this research process been released on the album *Traditional Music and Songs from Palestine* (Palestine: Popular Arts Centre PAC1001; CD album).
82. Louis Brehony, "Of Love and Resistance: Shafiq Kabha, Palestinian Music Icon, 1960–2013," *Palestine Chronicle*, November 10, 2013, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/of-love-and-resistance-shafik-kabha-palestinian-music-icon-1960-2013/>.
83. A. Morgan, "Struggle for a Music," in *World Music: The Rough Guide* (London: Rough Guides, 1994), 177.
84. A. Morgan, and M. Adileh, "Palestinian Music: The Sounds of Struggle," in *World Music: The Rough Guide*, vol. 1 (London: Rough Guides, 1999), 385–390.
85. Dirgham Hanna Sbait, "Palestinian Wedding Songs," in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 6, *The Middle East*, ed. Virginia Danielson, Scott Marcus, and Dwight Reynolds (New York: Routledge, 2002), 579–92; Nadia Yaqub, "The Palestinian Cinematic Wedding," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 3, no. 2 (2007): 56–85.
86. Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, "Popular Music of the Intifada," in Danielson, Marcus, and Reynolds, *Middle East*, 635–40.
87. Joseph A. Massad, "Liberating Songs: Palestine Put to Music," in *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, ed. Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 175–201.
88. David A. McDonald, *My Voice Is My Weapon: Music, Nationalism and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 4.
89. Nadeem Karkabi, "Staging Particular Difference: Politics of Space in the Palestinian Alternative Music Scene," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 6, no. 3 (2013): 308–328; and "Electro-Dabke: Performing Cosmopolitan Nationalism and Borderless Humanity," *Public Culture* 30, no. 1 (2018): 173–96.
90. Moslih Kanaaneh, "Introduction: Do Palestinian Musicians Play Music or Politics?" in Kanaaneh et al., *Palestinian Music and Song*, 9.
91. Boulos, "Negotiating the Elements."
92. Yara El-Ghadban and Kiven Strohm, "The Ghosts of Resistance: Dispatches from Palestinian Art," in Kanaaneh et al., *Palestinian Music and Song*, 175–200.
93. Nader Jalal and Issa Boulos, "A Musical Catastrophe: The Direct Impact of the Nakba on Palestinian Musicians and Musical Life" (interview by Heather Burshesh), in Kanaaneh et al., *Palestinian Music and Song*, 37–52. Tamari and Nas-sar, *Storyteller of Jerusalem*.

94. Interview with Mahmoud Zeidan, Ted Swedenburg, "Songs of Resistance," in *Voices of the Nakba: A Living History of Palestine*, ed. Diana Allan (London: Pluto, 2021), 149–56.
95. Nizar Rohana, "'*Ud Taqsim* as a Model of Pre-Composition," PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2021.
96. Lila Abu Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 17.
97. Rosemary Sayigh, "Making Holes in the Wall: Palestinian Oral Testimonies," *Words and Silences* 5, no. 2 (2011): 15–19.

## Chapter 1

1. The Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations wrote to the general secretary that "in less than 24 hours . . . more than 120 Palestinians, including ten members of one family, have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces. The death toll now stands at more than 790 Palestinians killed, the majority of them children and women, and more than 5,000 persons injured, as Israel, the occupying Power, continues its bloody aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the besieged Gaza Strip" (UN, "Illegal Israeli Actions in OPT—Letter from Palestine," Chargé d'affaires, July 25, 2006). <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-186073/>. Accessed February 2, 2022.
2. Interview with the author, July 2014.
3. Lyrics to Sayyid Darwish's "Lahn el-fuqaha'" (The preachers' anthem) by Badi' Khairy, translated by Reem Kelani for her *Live at the Tabernacle* (UK: Fuse Records CFCD050, 2015).
4. The political differences referred to include Reem's support for the 2011 "Syrian Spring," discussed in chapter 2. Kuwait quickly followed its ally Saudi Arabia in withdrawing its representatives from the country, yet Kuwaiti money bankrolled the insurgents; Christopher Phillips, *The Battle for Syria: International Rivalry in the New Middle East* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 158.
5. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, trans. Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Christopher Tingley (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977).
6. See also Edward W. Said, *Peace and Its Discontents* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 27.
7. This and the remaining quotes from Reem Kelani in this chapter are from a series of interviews conducted by the author between July and December 2017.
8. Time-limited visits were permitted by the Israeli authorities in the pre-intifada years and served to build ties among new generations and villages left behind; Shafeeq Ghabra, "Palestinians in Kuwait: The Family and the Politics of Survival," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 2 (1988): 62–83.
9. Martin Stokes, *The Republic of Love: Cultural Intimacy in Turkish Popular Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 20.
10. Martin Stokes, "On Musical Cosmopolitanism," Macalester International Roundtable, Institute for Global Citizenship, 2007.

11. al-Nakib, Mai, "Kanafani in Kuwait: A Clinical Cartography," *Deleuze Studies* 9, no. 1 (2015): 88–111.
12. Lyrics from online videos of the concert.
13. This contrasted sharply to life in parts of Palestine. Umm Rasheed grew up in Gaza City in the 1960s and says that *qjnabi* (foreign) music was absent, apart from Hebrew-language songs coming from the Israelis: "The first English song I remember hearing was the song from *Titanic* [in 1997]." From a conversation with the author, July 2021.
14. Accounts of Cairene influence include Carolyn Landau, "'My Own Little Morocco at Home': A Biographical Account of Migration, Mediation and Music Consumption," in *Migrating Music*, ed. Jason Toynbee and Byron Dueck (London: Routledge, 2011), 38–54; Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthūm, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
15. The Cairo-born movie star known as the Cinderella of Arab cinema. The "even" may refer to the adult content of the films, typically love stories.
16. Conversation with the author, December 2020, cf. Introduction, n1.
17. Massad, "Liberating Songs," 178–186.
18. Kanafani, "al-Qadiyya hiya al-asl," in *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 482.
19. Ghassan Kanafani, *Rijal fi al-shams* (Limassol, Cyprus: Rimal, 2013 [1963, trans. Hilary Kilpatrick as *Men in the Sun* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 65.
20. Mohammad al-Qazar, "Hamla risala," *al-Ahram*, August 31, 2020; Massad, "Liberating Songs," 184.
21. Reem frequently tells the story of her first performance, for example, in her speech at the Wow Bradford conference on local activism and global solidarity, November 5, 2016 (eyewitness account).
22. Interview with BBC Radio 3 World on your Street, July 27, 2004, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/world/onyourstreet/msreem3.shtml>.
23. Among these, Sima Kan'an and her band al-Fajr (The dawn) apparently performed so many songs by the radical band Sabreen that some assumed she had written them.
24. The following year in Beirut, Fairuz was awarded the key to the city by the Jerusalem Cultural Committee for her singing of "Zahrat al-mada'in."
25. In 1967, 320,000 Palestinians fled or were exiled, but almost double this number, 655,000, left between 1967 and 1986, writes Nur Masalha in *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (London: Pluto, 2003), 178.
26. The blatant colonialist lyrics of Naomi Shemer's "Jerusalem of Gold," sung by Zionist occupiers during the 1967 conquest, is described as "dangerous" and "even anti-Jewish" by Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Land of Israel: From Holy Land to Homeland* (London: Verso, 2012), 8.
27. N. Abu Murad, *al-Akhawan Rahbani: hayah wa-masrah* (Beirut: Dar Amjad li-al-nashr wa-l-tawzi', 1990), 145.



28. Christopher Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon: The Fairouz and Rahbani Nation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 95.
29. Sung by Fairuz at the Damascus Festival gathering of Pan-Arab culture and politics in 1966, “Sayfun fal-yushhar” (A sword for survival) pledged solidarity with the Palestinian anticolonial struggle: “We’ll return the home to its owners and meet fire with fire.”
30. Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs*, 224.
31. Interviewed for chapter 3, Umm Ali considers Fairuz, Marcel Khalife, and Julia Boutros as honorary Palestinians.
32. Issa Boulos, “The Palestinian Music-Making Experience in the West Bank,” PhD diss., Leiden University, 2020, 193.
33. Shannon points out that the story of al-Andalus in popular imagination and cultural framings across the Arab world and Mediterranean regions also encompasses histories of exile, conquest, and movement. See Jonathan Holt Shannon, *Performing al-Andalus: Music and Nostalgia across the Mediterranean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 25.
34. Gönenç Hongur, “Music in Peace Building and Conflict Resolution: The Case of Fairouz,” *Current Research in Social Sciences* 2, no. 3 (2016): 125.
35. Stone, *Popular Culture and Nationalism*, 122.
36. The *Andalusiyat* album notes claimed to do just that. In conversation, musician Tarik Beshir contrasted the Rahbani *muwashshah* with “real,” earlier versions (correspondence with the author, November 2017).
37. Sami W. Asmar, “Challenging the Status Quo in War-Torn Lebanon: Ziad Rahbani, the Avant-Garde Heir to Musical Tradition,” in *The Arab Avant-Garde: Music, Politics, Modernity*, ed. Thomas Burkhalter, Kay Dickinson, and Benjamin J. Harbert (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 149.
38. My research suggests that Arab and U.S. listeners were largely unaware of Morris Albert’s own identity as a Brazilian. For the Palestinian middle class, Albert was for all intents and purposes an American.
39. Writing in 1988, Ghabra points out that, despite limits imposed by military authorities, “the entire [Kuwait-based] Palestinian population visits the West Bank or Gaza at one time or another, since the majority still have relatives there;” Ghabra, “Palestinians in Kuwait.”
40. Ghabra, “Palestinians in Kuwait.”
41. McDonald, *My Voice Is My Weapon*, 111.
42. Swedenburg also refers to examples of British military incursions into weddings during its suppression of the 1936–39 Palestinian revolt (Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* [Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003], 164, 168).
43. More or less contemporaneous with Reem’s attendance at the Nein wedding, a 1977 diary entry by Hatim Kanaaneh reports of repression in the nearby town of Arrabeh: “Imams in mosques and folk singers at village weddings are



- being interrogated and even jailed by the Shin Bet for making traditional pronouncements that have nationalistic overtones." See Hatim Kanaaneh, *A Doctor in Galilee: The Life and Struggle of a Palestinian in Israel* (London: Pluto, 2008), 4. Palestinian weddings are also documented as sites of repression in Jordan: Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 254.
44. Sbait, "Debate in the Improvised-Sung Poetry."
  45. Sbait's account includes lines from the poet-singers Muhammad and Qasim al-Asadi, promising to "never yield to humiliation" and expressing hope for the return of Palestinian refugees ("Debate in the Improvised-Sung Poetry," 112).
  46. Singer Ibrahim Sbehat explains that the meaning of the phrase goes back over 200 years and is thought to come from the story of a Palestinian farmer who had money and sheep but lost all he had when thieves took them from him. According to the tale, he wandered the streets shouting "*ya halali ya mali*," which in this case meant "my sheep my money," and little children chased behind him shouting the same phrase (discussion with the author, December 2015). This story is told to children in Gaza today (discussion with Rasheed Anbar, March 2018).
  47. The refrain also features in the vocals of "MC Hadda," Walaa Sbait, for the project Ministry of Dub-Key, drawing on reggae and linking Palestine to trends in international black culture and notions of liberation.
  48. Steven C. Caton, "*Peaks of Yemen I Summon*": Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 54.
  49. Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt*, 131.
  50. The song "Klappa Dina Händer" (Clap your hands) by the Palestinian-Swedish band Kofia is a celebration of dance and merriment with the return of a jailed husband.
  51. Beshara, Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 56.
  52. Joseph A. Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Routledge, 2006), 36.
  53. Rhoda Ann Kanaaneh, *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 22.
  54. Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 10.
  55. Khaled, *My People Shall Live*, 32.
  56. Kuwait, and much of western Iraq, was earmarked for direct British rule during the wartime Sykes-Picot agreement by Britain, France, and czarist Russia.
  57. Formal independence came as British imperialism faced existential threats, weakened by the 1956 Suez crisis and the overthrow of its monarchical allies in Iraq in 1958. Although Britain's rule in Kuwait officially ended in 1961, the "withdrawal" agreement meant that its military armory remained in place until a decade later.

58. British Petroleum maintained a 50 percent interest in Kuwait's oil industry, benefiting spectacularly from a more than eightfold rise in oil production from 1950 to 1971.
59. Naji al-Ali, *A Child in Palestine: The Cartoons of Naji al-Ali* (London: Verso, 2009), 46.
60. Khaled, *My People Shall Live*, 37.
61. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed., *Modern Arabic Fiction: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 46.
62. Laleh Khalili, *Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula* (London: Verso, 2021), 196–97.
63. “‘Atifat al-muqawama” (Passion of the resistance), in Kanafani, *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 17.
64. Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*, 42.
65. Fred Halliday, *Arabia without Sultans: A Survey of Political Instability in the Arab World* (New York: Vintage, 1974), 437.
66. It is notable that during this period there were 100,000 more males than females in Kuwait. Raja Shehadeh reports that some husbands worked all year in Kuwait and left pregnant wives in Ramallah. See Raja Shehadeh, *Going Home: A Walk through Fifty Years of Occupation* (New York: New Press, 2019), 121.
67. Toufic Haddad, “Palestinian Forced Displacement from Kuwait: The Overdue Accounting,” *Badil* 44 (Summer–Autumn 2010): 35–42, <https://www.badil.org/publications/al-majdal/issues/items/1355.html>.” Ghabra notes that the implementation of a temporary status and strict regulations on visas was “not necessarily particular to Palestinians in Kuwait”; Ghabra, “Palestinians in Kuwait,” 112.
68. Marked by the constant threat of deportation, this system remains in place in Lebanon, as well as in the oil states of the Gulf. See Ahmed Kanna, “Outsiders of the Oil States,” in *Global Middle East: Into the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 247.
69. Ghabra, “Palestinians in Kuwait,” 112.
70. See Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.
71. Khaled, *My People Shall Live*, 35.
72. See Abdul-Reda Assiri, *Kuwait's Foreign Policy: City-State in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), 147–50.
73. Jill Crystal, *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992), 173.
74. Ann M. Lesch, “Palestinians in Kuwait,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20, no. 4 (1991), 172.
75. Bashir Abu-Manneh, *The Palestinian Novel: From 1948 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 163.
76. Haddad, “Palestinian Forced Displacement,” <https://www.badil.org/publications/al-majdal/issues/items/1355.html>.

77. See Hassan A. el-Najjar, *The Gulf War: Overreaction and Excessiveness* (Dalton, GA: Amazone, 2001), chap. 10.
78. al-Ali, *Karikatur*, 152.
79. For Said, orientalist discourse meant that terrorism had become “permanently, almost subliminally associated with Islam, a notion no less overused and vague than terrorism itself.” In Edward W. Said, “Identity, Negation and Violence,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 171 (September/October 1988): <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i171/articles/edward-said-identity-negation-and-violence>.
80. Kanafani, “Richard Carleton TV interview.”
81. Suzan Quitaz, “Who Killed Naji al-Ali?,” *New Arab*, August 29, 2017.
82. al-Ali, *Child in Palestine*, 53.
83. Al-Nakib, “Kanafani in Kuwait,” 88.
84. Al-Nakib, “Kanafani in Kuwait,” 101.
85. Laleh Khalili, “Sha’bi Cosmopolitanisms,” *The Garming* blog, January 14, 2015. <https://thegarming.org/2015/01/14/shabi-cosmopolitanisms/>.
86. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *A Critique of the German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress, 1968), 496.
87. Kanafani, *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 94.
88. David Yaffe, “Globalisation: A Redivision of the World by Imperialism,” in *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* 131 (June/July 1996), <https://www.revolutionarycommunist.org/capitalist-crisis/1444-globalisation-a-redivision-of-the-world-by-imperialism.html>.
89. Stokes, *Republic of Love*, 20.
90. George D. Sawa, *Music Performance Practice in the Early ‘Abbasid Era: 132–320 AH / 750–932 AD* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 6–7.
91. Tamara Caraus and Elena Paris, “Introduction: Migrant Protests as Radical Cosmopolitics,” in *Migration, Protest Movements and the Politics of Resistance: A Radical Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitan*, ed. Tamara Caraus and Elena Paris (New York: Routledge, 2019), 12.
92. Caraus and Paris, “Introduction,” 21.
93. James Ingram, “Cosmopolitanism from below: Universalism as Contestation,” in *Contestatory Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Tom Bailey (London: Routledge, 2017), 74.
94. William Smith, “Law and (Global) Order: Towards a Theory of Cosmopolitan Policing,” in *Contestatory Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Tom Bailey (London: Routledge, 2017), 138. An alternative view of the piracy off Somalia is offered by Glen Ford, “Buccaneers in Somali Waters—but They’re Not Somalis,” *Black Agenda Report* (November 17, 2008), <https://www.blackagendareport.com/node/19978>.
95. Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music*, 13. In another work, Turino and Lea see Israel as “the most successful example” of “diasporic nationalism,” yet fail to ask who is served or betrayed by this “success.” See Thomas Turino, and James Lea, *Identity and the Arts in Diaspora Communities* (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park, 2004), 7.

96. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 142.
97. al-Ali, *Child in Palestine*, 79.
98. Reem Kelani, *Live at the Tabernacle* (UK: Fuse Records CFCD050, 2015; CD album).
99. Reem Kelani, "Burj el-Barajneh Dispatch," *Middle East Report* 210 (Spring 1999): 13.
100. *Live at the Tabernacle* (2016).
101. Correspondence with the author.
102. The contradictions of Mahmoud Abbas's later apology to Kuwait are exposed by Baroud, *Second Palestinian Intifada*, 122.

## Chapter 2

1. Ahmad Al Khatib quotes from interviews and correspondence with the author, January to May 2021.
2. Edward W. Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 18.
3. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, trans. Roger Allen and Adnan Haydar (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 187–88.
4. Ghassan Kanafani, "Thoughts on Change and the 'Blind Language,'" trans. Barbara Harlow and Nejd Yaziji, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 10 1990 (1968), 137–157. Originally published in *al-Hadaf* 919 (July 17, 1988): 46–49; 920 (July 24, 1988): 43–45.
5. Sham is also a name given to both Syria and its capital, Damascus. Bilad al-Sham is sometimes referred to as "Greater Syria." However, Masalha finds this equation problematic, showing that the idea of Palestine forming part of a Greater Syria was, in reality, a short-lived tendency among nineteenth-century Arab liberationists; see Nur Masalha, *Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History* (London: Zed Books, 2018), 294–95.
6. Loubna Qutami and Omar Zahzah, "The War of Words: Language as an Instrument of Palestinian National Struggle," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1–2 (2020): 66–90.
7. Said, *Orientalism*, 21, 272.
8. Ghassan Kanafani, "On the PFLP and the September Crisis," *New Left Review* 1, no. 67 (May/June 1971), 51.
9. Tamari and Nassar, *Storyteller of Jerusalem*, 119.
10. McDonald, *My Voice is My Weapon*, 3.
11. Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (New York: Picador, 2020), 68.
12. Said, *After the Last Sky*, 120.
13. Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 237.
14. The 1981 arrest of folklorist Nimr Sarhan is referenced in Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 251.

15. Ramzy Baroud, *The Last Earth: A Palestinian Story* (London: Pluto, 2018), 188. Jordan and Syria collaborated in rendition and torture as part of the U.S.-led "War on Terror": see Laleh Khalili, *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counter-insurgencies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 102, 124.
16. Jaber Suleiman, "Palestinian Refugees and Lebanon's Multilayered Crisis," *al-Shabaka*, September 29, 2020. <https://al-shabaka.org/memos/palestinian-refugees-and-lebanons-multilayered-crisis/>.
17. Rochelle A. Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 8.
18. Norman G. Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 176.
19. The 1970s saw Phalange-Zionist massacres at Adloun (1978), Karantina (1976), Tel al-Za'tar (1976), and Ein el-Rumaneh (1975).
20. Sayigh, *Palestinians*, 114.
21. Sayigh, *Palestinians*, 140.
22. Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1990), 83, 86; Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs*, 100.
23. Ourooba Shetewi, "Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Variation in a Dialect Contact Situation: The Case of Palestinian Children and Adolescents in Syria," PhD diss., Newcastle University, 2018, 3.
24. In Walter Armbrust, ed., *Mass Mediations: New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 187.
25. At one point in 2015, ISIL and al-Nusra front reportedly controlled 80 percent of the camp.
26. Before the 2011 crisis, the vast majority of Palestinian refugees in Syria lived outside twelve recognized camps, among the general population. According to the latest data, 438,000 remain in Syria, with around 280,000 internally displaced, and 120,000 are thought to have left the country (UNRWA Syrian Crisis pages, 2021; <https://www.unrwa.org/syria-crisis>, accessed February 3, 2023).
27. Boulos, "Palestinian Music-Making Experience," 330.
28. Jalal and Boulos, "Musical Catastrophe," 48.
29. Boulos, "Negotiating the Elements," 53.
30. See Davis on Yarmouk in *Palestinian Village Histories*, 133.
31. McDonald discusses Baladna in detail: *My Voice is My Weapon*, 163–98.
32. Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 245.
33. See Mohamed Fayez Tarawneh and Mahmood Naamneh, "Urbanization and Social Identities in Jordan: The Case of Irbid," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42, no. 4 (2011): 628.
34. Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 174.
35. Shehadeh, *Going Home*, 35.
36. Hassan Rashid E. Abdel-Jawad, "Lexical and Phonological Variation in Spoken Arabic in Amman," PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1981, 77.

37. Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 6.
38. Ali Jihad Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World: The Culture and Artistry of "Tarab"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40–42.
39. Sayigh sees the teachers of the camps as "close to the people" and "far from the traditional *ustadh*" of times past; *Palestinians*, 194.
40. Jamil Bashir, *al-Oud wa-tariqat tadrisu*, vols. 1–2 (Tehran: Ministry of Education, 1961; 1969).
41. "We consider him an Iraqi," said Iraqi performer and composer Ahmed Mukhtar of Palestinian *oud* player and composer Rawhi al-Khammash. Al-Khammash was, however, well grounded in Egyptian *maqam* frameworks and brought both this early influence and his later studies in Syria into the Iraqi scene.
42. Conversation with Ahmed Mukhtar. Iraqi *oud* player and composer Naseer Shamma also draws back to the Abbasid era to create "similar" ensembles to those initiated by musician Ibrahim al-Mawsili (767–850 CE): concert program, "From Ashur to Seville," Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona, October 2018.
43. Habib Hassan Touma, *The Music of the Arabs*, 2nd ed. (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1996), 147.
44. Conversation with the author. See Zakariyya Yusuf, ed., *Risalat al-Kindi fi al-luhun wa-l-nagham* (Baghdad: Matba'at Shafiq, 1965), 31.
45. The piece featured in a July 2011 performance at the Jerusalem Music Festival.
46. The now standard *sama'i* form has four *khanat*, or sections, in the ten-beat *sama'i thaqil* cycle, with a *taslim* (a sort of refrain) between each. The final *khana* usually uses a different rhythm, most commonly a three-beat cycle. In other *sama'iyat*, al-Khammash introduces different rhythms for this section but *sama'i 'ajam* follows the triple-beat model.
47. Bashir, *al-Oud wa-tariqat tadrisu*, 2:55–56, 62–64.
48. The twenty-six recorded albums of Munir Bashir, for example, feature only one *taqsima* in *maqam bayat*, though Jamil Bashir and al-Khammash both recorded versions of the traditionalized "*sama'i bayat qadim*."
49. Like several of Jamil Bashir's exercises, the double- and triple-stopped notes do not feature quarter-tone intervals.
50. Boulous, "Palestinian Music-Making Experience," 239.
51. Conversation with Khaled Jubran, February 2020.
52. The Oriental Music Ensemble's performance at a Palestine solidarity event in Brighton in June 2016 featured the Mohamed al-Qasabgi piece "Dhikrayat."
53. I suggested that this was a mistranslation on the part of the composer, that "exile" was more appropriate to the Palestinian case, as described by Said in *After the Last Sky* (115). Ahmad was sympathetic to this view but felt that Said, whom he had met, "really was in the diaspora," with a rather shallow understanding of indigenous musics.

54. Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1998), 159.
55. Eddie Abrahams, "How Saddam Crushed the Communists," *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* 100 (April 1991), <https://www.revolutionarycommunist.org/middle-east/iraq/5179-hsc-240418>.
56. Jalal and Boulos, "Musical Catastrophe," 40.
57. Al-Wer sees Damascus as exhibiting a "pan-Levantine norm," transmitted regionally since World War I. Enam Al-Wer, "The Formation of the Dialect of Amman: From Chaos to Order," in *Arabic in the City: Issues in Dialect Contact and Language Variation*, ed. Catherine Miller et al. (London: Routledge, 2007), 58.
58. Prominent examples included Abdel Wahab's "Inta 'umri" and "Amal hayati," and Hamdi's "Zay al-hawa."
59. Revered *tarab* vocalists.
60. Jonathan Holt Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 4–6; Münir Nurettin Beken, "Aesthetics and Artistic Criticism at the Turkish Gazino," *Journal of Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean* 8 (2003): 8–19, [https://www2.umbc.edu/MA/index/number8/gazino/bek\\_00.htm](https://www2.umbc.edu/MA/index/number8/gazino/bek_00.htm).
61. Salamandra, in Armbrust, *Mass Mediations*, 187.
62. In Damascus, at least, this includes the establishment of a much more limited fretting system for the *buzuq*, for example, compared with earlier Syrian players such as Muhammad Abdel Karim or Seïd Yûsiv. The piano arrives unchanged, in terms of its equal-tempered tuning.
63. Shannon remarks on 1990s concerts in Damascus that one was more likely to find "pop" icons like George Wasouf than the traditional stylings of Sabah Fakhri. There are signs that this has begun to change, particularly with the number of young Damascus-based musicians performing on instruments like the *buzuq* more recently. As a side note, I cannot help but feel that Shannon draws a false dichotomy, with Wasouf's fans declaring him the Sultan of *tarab*. See Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees*, 38.
64. Nazik was lauded during the Syrian Days of Culture in November 2020, when a concert was organized in his honor at the Damascus Opera House.
65. Discussion with Khaled Jubran. See also Asmar, "Challenging the Status Quo," 154.
66. Chanters are bagless pipes used in learning and practice.
67. See chapter 6 on Gaza for a more in-depth discussion of these "genres" in Palestinian music.
68. The earliest archeological find dates bagpipes to 1000 BCE in Alacahöyük, Anatolia, as documented in Grove Music Online, s.v. "Bagpipe," by William A. Cock, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.01773>; see also John Derrick, *The Image of Ireland, with a Discoverie of Woodkarne* (London, 1581), plate 2, Edinburgh University Library, <http://www.docs.is.ed.ac.uk/docs/lib-archive/bgallery/Gallery/researchcoll/pages/bg0054.jpg.htm>,



- which suggests that Britain's pipes have Irish origins. That the pipes "fit" in Palestinian music may speak to the kind of "genealogical" connections found by Michael Frishkopf between Muslim West African and European instruments; "Musical Journeys," in Bayat and Herrera, *Global Middle East*, 158.
69. Michael F. O'Dwyer, "Races and Religions in the Punjab," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 74, no. 3827 (1926): 420–49.
  70. Andrew Chun-kit Yu, "The Scottish Piping Development in Hong Kong" (paper presented at the Fourth International Bagpipe Conference, Mallorca, March 10, 2018).
  71. The formerly colonized Pakistani city of Sialkot reportedly exports 100,000 sets of bagpipes per year.
  72. For an account of this process in the Himalayas, see Andrew Alter, *Mountainous Sound Spaces: Listening to History and Music in the Uttarakhand Himalayas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
  73. Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 156.
  74. Though Palestinians still constituted a large majority, Article 22 of the Mandate Document earmarked English, Arabic, and Hebrew as "the official languages of Palestine."
  75. There is also evidence to suggest that Palestinians organized in the British occupation-era Boy Scouts did so to provide cover for revolutionary activities. See Jacob Norris, "Storying the Great Arab Revolt: Narratives of Resistance during 1936–39," in Allan, *Voices of the Nakba*, 131.
  76. Quotes from Bahaa Joumaa, Mustafa Dakhoul and Ziad Hbous Ali are from interviews and correspondence with the author, between July 2020 and January 2021.
  77. This includes on Palestine solidarity demonstrations in the United States: Micah Casella, "A Protester Is Playing Palestinian Music on a Middle Eastern Bagpipe," *Alamy News*, July 3, 2020, <http://bit.ly/3kfjQKn>.
  78. Along with El-Funoun's *Zagharid* album (1999), seminal artistic depictions of Palestinian weddings include Michel Khleifi's film *Wedding in Galilee* (1987).
  79. This introduction can be heard, for example, on Shafiq Kabha's 2010 version of "Mulayitain" or the many recordings of Lebanese *mutriba* Samira Tawfiq.
  80. Sbeit, "Debate in the Improvised-Sung Poetry."
  81. Gage Averill and Yuen-Ming David Yih, "Militarism in Haitian Music," in *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*, ed. Ingrid Monson (New York: Garland, 2000), 289.
  82. Andrew Alter, "Garhwali Bagpipes: Syncretic Processes in a North Indian Regional Musical Tradition," *Asian Music* 29, no. 1 (1997): 16.
  83. Julianne Hammer, *Palestinians Born in Exile: Diaspora and the Search for a Homeland* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 173.
  84. See Enam Al-Wer, "Language and Gender in the Middle East and North Africa," in *The Handbook of Language, Gender, and Sexuality*, edited by Susan Ehrlich, Miriam Meyerhoff, and Janet Holmes, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 396–411.



85. Zakariya Muhammad, quoted in Hammer, *Palestinians Born in Exile*, 173.
86. See, for example, Abdelatif al-Bargouthi, *Anthology of Palestinian Dal'una* (Birzeit: Birzeit University, 1990), 11.
87. Interview with the author, August 2013.
88. Jalal in Jalal and Boulos, "Musical Catastrophe," 37. See also Elias Sahab, Selim Sahab, and Victor Sahab, *Al-Musiqa wa-l-ghina' fi Filastin qabl 1948 wa-ba'daha* (Music and Song in Palestine Before and After 1948) (Beirut, Lebanon: M. K., 2021).
89. Artists vocally drawing on Syrian influences or embracing Bilad al-Sham include Reem Talhami (Kanaanah et al., *Palestinian Music and Song*, 165) and 47Soul, whose approach to electro-dabke speaks to developments in Syria as well as Palestine.
90. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Phileos (New York: Grove, 2004), 180.
91. Diana Allan, "What Bodies Remember: Sensory Experience as Historical Counterpoint in the Nakba Archive," in *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba*, ed. Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha (London: Zed Books, 2018), 66.
92. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982), 68.
93. Niloofar Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 43.
94. Enam Al-Wer, "New Dialect Formation: The Focusing of -kum in Amman," in *Social Dialectology*, ed. David Britain and Jenny Cheshire (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), 60.
95. Uri Horesh, "Palestinian Dialects and Identities Shifting across Physical and Virtual Borders," *Multilingua* 40, no. 5 (2020): 647–73.
96. Shetewi, "Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Variation," 240.
97. Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 251.
98. Riyad Mansour (UN chargé d'affaires), "Illegal Israeli Actions in OPT—Letter from Palestine," Palestine: Ramallah. July 25, 2006, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-186073/>. Accessed February 3, 2023; Human Rights Watch, "Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War," *Human Rights Watch* 9, no. 5(E) (September 2007), <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/lebanon0907.pdf>.
99. These also include commemorations of the life work of Ghassan Kanafani: "Nadwa siyasiyya fi dhikra istishad Ghassan Kanafani" (Political seminar in memory of the martyrdom of Ghassan Kanafani), *Farah News*, Beirut, July 12, 2017.
100. The term "regime change" has been used by successive U.S. presidents about actions in Arab countries, whether Libya (Reagan) or Iraq (Clinton, Bush Jr.). For discussion of this imperialist threat beyond the Middle East, see Joe Emersberger and Justin Podur, *Extraordinary Threat: The U.S. Empire, the Media, and Twenty Years of Coup Attempts in Venezuela* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2021).
101. Organizations such as the British-based, government-funded Rethink Rebuild Society, for example, convened exile music festivals, while lobbying

- for British military intervention in Syria. Rethink Rebuild Society, "Syria Between Dictatorship and ISIS," September 2015 (UK: Manchester), 7. [https://www.rrsoc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Syria\\_Between\\_Dictatorship&ISIS.pdf](https://www.rrsoc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Syria_Between_Dictatorship&ISIS.pdf).
102. Richard Jacquemond and Felix Lang, eds., *Culture and Crisis in the Arab World: Art, Practice and Production in Spaces of Conflict* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 8.
  103. Comments provided anonymously.
  104. Anchal Vohra, "Abdel-Basset al-Sarout: Controversial Singer of Syria's War," *al-Jazeera*, June 12, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2019/6/12/abdel-basset-al-sarout-controversial-singer-of-syrias-war>.
  105. Alexa Firat admits that describing the war in Syria as a revolution "implies a position," in "The Symbolic Power of Syrian Collective Memory since 2011," in Jacquemond and Lang, *Culture and Crisis in the Arab World*, 66.
  106. Abdullah Al Kafri, "Practicing Theatre and Playwriting in Damascus," in *Doomed by Hope: Essays on Arab Theatre*, ed. Eyad Houssami (London: Pluto, 2012), 98.
  107. Asaad Al-Saleh, "The Legacy of Saadallah Wannous," in Houssami, *Doomed by Hope*, 87.
  108. Unmentioned in these examples, a contrary position may be found in the work of Syrian actor and musician Duraid Lahham, whose film and theater gained a reputation for offering sharp witticism within the confines of the system.
  109. See El Said, Meari, and Pratt, *Rethinking Gender*, 2. It should also be noted that this title was borrowed from the Prague Spring of 1968, which sparked the hopes of the imperialists for the fall of socialism in Eastern Europe. That U.S. intelligence figures saw 1968 as a missed opportunity may have been one factor, for example, in U.S. imperialist backing for the counterrevolutionary movement in Poland in the 1980s.
  110. Israeli songs such as Naomi Schermer's "Jerusalem of Gold," for example, speak of life returning to Jericho, from its "slumber" under an apparently nonexistent Palestinian population, celebrating its violent colonization by Zionists.
  111. Elias Khoury, "Foreword: Hope Arising from Despair," in Houssami, *Doomed by Hope*, xiv.
  112. Haim Yacobi and Mansour Nasasra, *Routledge Handbook on Middle East Cities* (London: Routledge, 2020), 4–5.

### Chapter 3

1. At their request, the names of Umm Ali and her family are pseudonyms, as sections of the family navigate European immigration systems and travel in and out of Gaza.
2. Lyrics from "Nizilna 'al-shawari'" (We went down to the streets) by Walid Abdalsalam (1987).

3. Khaled, *My People Shall Live*, 66.
4. Suha Sabbagh, ed., *Palestinian Women of Gaza and the West Bank* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
5. Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 40–42.
6. Shira Robinson highlights the importance of oral histories in Palestinian reporting of the Kufr Qasim massacre as inscribing its events in collective memory in *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 169. In theories of oral history, one narrative is embedded in group experience: see Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 20.
7. Umm Jabr Wishah, "Palestinian Voices: The 1948 War and Its Aftermath," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, no. 4 (2006): 54–62.
8. At the time of writing, around 70 percent of Gaza residents are recognized as refugees, yet there are discrepancies, with many not registered, and widespread practices of intermarriage between pre-1948 Gazan and other Palestinian families. See Riccardo Bocco, "UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees: A History within History," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28, no. 2–3 (2009): 229–52.
9. Joe Sacco, *Palestine* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), 150.
10. Massad, "Liberating Songs," 191.
11. Conversation with Faten Shafiq Kabha.
12. Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), 900.
13. The work of Erica Chenoweth, for example, is drawn upon heavily by Extinction Rebellion. Chenoweth seeks to isolate "violent" examples of revolutionary and national liberation struggle, as opposed to "more effective" forms of nonviolence. Examples given by Chenoweth include the intifada, whose successes are seen in the widely discredited Oslo agreement, while socialist Cuba is seen as a dictatorship worse than its colonization. Such views did not, of course, prevent the writer from lauding the "Arab Spring." See Erica Chenoweth, "Think Again: Nonviolent Resistance," *Foreign Policy*, August 24, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/08/24/think-again-nonviolent-resistance/>. The 1987–93 intifada also took on militant forms, including the executions of collaborators and community parades of armed, *kuffieh*-wearing youths.
14. This is explored briefly in regards to Cairo in chapter 4.
15. Abrahams, *New Warlords*, 68.
16. Maher Mahmud al-Makadma was shot and killed in Bureij as he painted slogans on a camp wall on October 4, 1989 (United Nations Note by the Secretary-General, "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices") (New York: UN Digital Library, January 26, 1990), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/86676>. For a personal account of second intifada Israeli killings in Bureij and dehumanization in U.S. media, see Baroud, *Second Palestinian Intifada*, 54–56.
17. Khaled, *My People Shall Live*, 6.

18. After the Nakba, bridges were demolished by Zionist forces in villages such as Lifta, West Jerusalem (Activestills, "Visiting the Last Standing Nakba Village of Lifta," +972mag, March 5, 2014, <https://www.972mag.com/photos-visiting-the-last-standing-nakba-village-of-lifta/>). The Allenby bridge link between the West Bank and Jordan remained tightly controlled by Israeli and Jordanian forces. Cultural references included Fairuz songs "Jisr al-'awda" (Bridge of return) and "'Ala jisr el-lawzia" (On the almond bridge), and Kana-fani's 1965 play *Jisr ila al-abad* (Bridge to Eternity). The act of writing also appears in Palestinian and wider Arab imagery, including the Mahmoud Darwish poem "Write, I am an Arab" and Fairuz's "Biktub ismak ya habibi" (I write your name, my love).
19. Salman Abu Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine: 1917-1966* (London: Palestine Land Society, 2010), 112.
20. Joseph A. Massad, "Liberating Songs: Palestine Put to Music," in *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, ed. Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 175-201.
21. There is no agreement on a translation of the repeated figure giving the song its title, which translates literally as "on the quatrain." Other Palestinian songs such as "Dal'una" face similar issues in English interpretation.
22. Al-Muayzin also composed the (official) Palestinian national anthem, "Fida'i."
23. Recent performances include arrangements by Rola Azar and Sol Band.
24. Lahham developed a relationship to Palestine, visiting Gaza to support the development of local theater in July 2009.
25. Lyrics attributed to Boutros Rouhana.
26. Urban Palestinian women frequently replace the *qaf* with a glottal stop. So *baqara* (cow) becomes *ba'ara*. Umm Ali reveals that her *fellahi* pronunciation as *bagara* was a source of derision among workmates in Gaza. Palestinians often wear accents as badges and make jokes of the lilting elongations of Khalili (Hebronite) accents or other regional variations.
27. Ted Swedenburg, "The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier," *Anthropological Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (1990): 18-30.
28. As the presentation of Fairuz in chapter 1 suggests, the music and cultural products of this period actually presented multiple forms of imagery, often simultaneously, with both existing on the ground in internal displacement and a wider *ghurba*.
29. al-Ali, *Child in Palestine*, 14.
30. al-Ali, *Child in Palestine*, 20.
31. See, for example, Slyomovics, *Object of Memory*, 121; Sayigh, *Palestinians*, 10.
32. At the same time, when carrying the goal of return, Palestinian experiences of colonial displacement are distinct from Williams's characterization of "the past or the lost" in capitalist-instigated migrations to the city. See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 235.

33. Ilana Feldman, "Home as a Refrain: Remembering and Living Displacement in Gaza," *History and Memory* 18, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 10–47.
34. Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs*, 101.
35. Amirah Silmi, "al-Nidal ma zal nidal al-ard," *al-Adab*, February 13, 2020.
36. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 67.
37. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 23.
38. Kanafani, *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 431.
39. The Marxist position on the national question is explored in David Reed, *Ireland: The Key to the British Revolution* (London: Larkin, 1984), 3–25.
40. James Connolly, *Labour in Irish History* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1910).
41. "To the German Workers' Educational Society in London" (December 16, 1867), in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question* (Moscow: Progress, 1971).
42. Silmi, "al-Nidal ma zal nidal al-ard."
43. Jean Genet, "The Palestinians," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3, no. 1 (1973): 3–34.
44. Silmi, "al-Nidal ma zal nidal al-ard." Kanafani also referred to the PFLP as a plowed (*harth*) land, vulnerable to contradictions in its Bilad al-Sham environment. See his "al-Muqawama wa-mu'dilatuha," *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 163.
45. See Eileen S. Kuttub, "Palestinian Women in the Intifada: Fighting on Two Fronts," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1993): 69–85.
46. Recorded by al-Ashiqeen in the 1970s, the song is attributed to Nuh Ibrahim, who wrote the words as a poem following the execution of Fu'ad Hijazi, Atta al-Zeer, and Mohammad Khalil Jamjoum, an hour apart at Akka prison on June 17, 1930. The events are discussed by McDonald, who sees the Buraq uprising as a sectarian case: "the real reason the men were executed" (*My Voice Is My Weapon*, 55). The background to the events was the violent Zionist attempt to capture al-Aqsa (al-Hadaf editorial, [https://hadfnews.ps/post/84044/17-%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%88-1930-%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%89-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%85-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B1.%E2%80%A217%20Yunyo%201930%3A%20dhikra%20shuhada'%20hawrat%20al-Buraq%20Hijazi%20wa-Jamjum%20wa-l-Zir,%20Bawwab%20al-Hadaf,%20June%2017,%202017%29.%20Ilan%20Papp%C3%A9%20contextualizes%20the%20events%20within%20the%20intensified%20Zionist%20influx%20in%20the%201920s%20and%20the%20%E2%80%9C%E2%80%90ruthless%E2%80%9D%20British-Zionist%20actions,%20which%20killed%20116%20Muslims%20in%20the%20same%20week%20\(%E2%80%9CHaj%20Amin%20and%20the%20Buraq%20Revolt,%E2%80%9DJerusalem%20Quarterly%2018%20%5BJune%202003%5D%3A%206%E2%80%9316%29.%E2%80%A2](https://hadfnews.ps/post/84044/17-%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%88-1930-%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%89-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%85-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B1.%E2%80%A217%20Yunyo%201930%3A%20dhikra%20shuhada'%20hawrat%20al-Buraq%20Hijazi%20wa-Jamjum%20wa-l-Zir,%20Bawwab%20al-Hadaf,%20June%2017,%202017%29.%20Ilan%20Papp%C3%A9%20contextualizes%20the%20events%20within%20the%20intensified%20Zionist%20influx%20in%20the%201920s%20and%20the%20%E2%80%9C%E2%80%90ruthless%E2%80%9D%20British-Zionist%20actions,%20which%20killed%20116%20Muslims%20in%20the%20same%20week%20(%E2%80%9CHaj%20Amin%20and%20the%20Buraq%20Revolt,%E2%80%9DJerusalem%20Quarterly%2018%20%5BJune%202003%5D%3A%206%E2%80%9316%29.%E2%80%A2)). "17 Yunyo 1930: dhikra shuhada' thawrat al-Buraq Hijazi wa-Jamjum wa-l-Zir," *Bawwab al-Hadaf*, June 17, 2017 ). Ilan Pappé contextualizes the events within the intensified Zionist influx in the 1920s and the "ruthless" British-Zionist actions, which killed 116 Muslims in the same week ("Haj Amin and the Buraq Revolt," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 18 [June 2003]: 6–16).
47. In one recent example, an online version of the song is set to images of PFLP martyr Yousef Aziz Kashour, gunned down aged nineteen by Israeli forces in Abu Dis in July 2017.
48. Amira Hass, "Broken Bones and Broken Hopes," *Haaretz*, November 4, 2005.
49. Walid Abdalsalam, *Min Dar li-Dar*, (Palestine: Jerusalem, no label, 1984; cassette album).

50. Discussion with the author, February 2023.
51. Firqat al-Masar, *Salam li-awlad al-balad*, (Palestine: Jerusalem, no label 1989; cassette album). Like other musicians of the period, Abdalsalam did not print his name on the sleeve of the cassette, owing to escalating Zionist threats against them.
52. Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones*, 52.
53. Sabbagh, *Palestinian Women*, 12.
54. See Philippa Strum, "West Bank Women and the Intifada: Revolution within the Revolution," in Sabbagh, *Palestinian Women*, 143; Robin Morgan, "Women in the Intifada," in Sabbagh, *Palestinian Women*, 153–70; and Teresa Thornhill, *Making Women Talk: The Interrogation of Palestinian Women Detainees by the Israeli General Security Services* (London: Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights, 1992).
55. Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt*, 187; Baroud, *Last Earth*, 113.
56. Edward W. Said, "Intifada and Independence," *Social Text* 22 (Spring 1989): 20.
57. Sabbagh, *Palestinian Women*, 14.
58. Susan Muaddi Darraj, "Palestinian Women: Fighting Two Battles," *Monthly Review* 56, no. 1 (2014): 25–36.
59. Islah Jad, *The Demobilization of Women's Movements: The Case of Palestine* (Mexico: AWID, 2008).
60. This era saw the emergence of lead women vocalists such as Kamilya Jubran, Rim Banna, and Reem Talhami, and groups like Sabaya al-Intifada (*Music of the Intifada*, UK: Venture VE 29, 1989).
61. Amirah Silmi, "Representations of Palestinian Women in Western Colonial Discourse," PhD diss., Birzeit University, 2017.
62. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Militarization and Violence against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East: A Palestinian Case Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
63. Khaled, *My People Shall Live*, 29.
64. Reed, *Ireland*, 40.
65. Sarah Irving, *Leila Khaled: Icon of Palestinian Liberation* (London: Pluto, 2012), 104.
66. Irving, *Leila Khaled*, 94.
67. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove, 1994).
68. Che Guevara, *Man and Socialism in Cuba* (Malé City, Maldives: Ocean, 2005).
69. Kanafani, "Al-Muqawama hiya al-asl," in *al-Dirasat*, 484.
70. Amirah Silmi, "Fi al-bahth 'an hamilat al-nar," *al-Adab*, March 13, 2021.
71. Leila Ettachfini, "'I Had to Be the Voice of Women': The First Female Hijacker Shares Her Story," *Vice*, August 4, 2016, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/9k99k7/leila-khaled-first-female-hijacker-profile>.
72. Jad, *Demobilization of Women's Movements*, 2–3.
73. Massad, *Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, 51.

74. Their argument was made in a detailed discussion of London-based campaigning against apartheid South Africa. See Gavin Brown and Helen Yaffe, *Youth Activism and Solidarity: The Non-Stop Picket against Apartheid* (London: Routledge, 2018).
75. Interviews with the author, November (Ramzy Baroud) and December (Khaled Barakat), 2020. Living in Gaza during a similar period to Umm Ali, Baroud pointed out that Islamist-linked bands did, in fact, have a distinct style and avoided reverbed microphones, “which they somehow found provocative.”
76. The many musicians who took up socialist slogans include Rajah al-Salfiti, Kofia, and Walid Abdalsalam.
77. Meari, “Sumud,” 559.
78. Nahla Abdo, “Feminism, Indigenoussness and Settler Colonialism: Oral History, Memory and the Nakba,” in *Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba*, ed. Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha (London: Zed Books, 2018), 60.

## Chapter 4

1. Stefan Franzen, “The Beauty of Rebellion,” *Qantara.de*, October 28, 2016, <https://en.qantara.de/content/musician-tamer-abu-ghazaleh-the-beauty-of-rebellion>.
2. Translation by Wiam El-Tamimi.
3. Online video release notes, Mostakell Records, April 2010. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP2Gg\\_A7uMo&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP2Gg_A7uMo&t=1s).
4. In Palestinian dialect *shams* (sun) becomes *shamiss*.
5. al-Najmi suggests that audience members in Egypt called for repetitions no matter what Umm Kulthum did: Danielson, *Voice of Egypt*, 137.
6. Khaled played live with Sabreen but did not appear on their albums.
7. There is much Palestinian revolutionary music that draws on traditional or traditionalized heritages (Nuh Ibrahim, Abu Arab, Rajah al-Salfiti, and Rim Banna offer a few historic examples), but I am thinking here further afield. Postrevolutionary Cuba, for example, harnessed Afro-Cuban son and other national musics toward socialist renewal: Robin D. Moore, *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 185–88.
8. Said, *After the Last Sky*, 56.
9. Jack Shenker, *The Egyptians: A Radical Story* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2017), 114.
10. Reem Abou-El-Fadl, “The Road to Jerusalem through Tahrir Square: Anti-Zionism and Palestine in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, no. 2 (2012): 6–26.
11. Abou-El-Fadl, “Road to Jerusalem.” See also Rosemary Hollis, “Mubarak: The Embodiment of ‘Moderate Arab Leadership’?,” in *Scripting Middle East Leaders*:



- The Impact of Leadership Perceptions on US and UK Foreign Policy*, ed. Lawrence Freedman and Jeffrey H. Michaels (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 171–93.
12. Though the community did not live in camps, there are parallels to processes described by Khalili in Lebanon, where children are focal points for nationalist storytelling and tradition (*Heroes and Martyrs*, 76); and in Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*, 52–58, where village books are aimed at the trusteeship of future generations.
  13. My sources for photographs referred to in this chapter include the artists, the Palestinian Museum, the Heritage Palestinian blog, and various Arab news agencies.
  14. The *ma'had*, or conservatoire, was named after Edward Said following his death.
  15. There are similarities in the stories of '48 Palestinians who made the move from other towns and villages. Khaled Jubran and Reem Talhami both dropped out of professional training in medicine and social work, respectively, to pursue music.
  16. Interview with the author, August 2013.
  17. *Nisma' w-nastamti'* video series, Ramallah Municipality Facebook page, March 12, 2021.
  18. From this point, I adopt the transliteration used for the song title by Tamer and Huda.
  19. As'ad Qattan, "Ya Luur hubbuki, Mitri al-Murr wa-ihimalat al-ughniyya al-jamila," *al-Mudon*, September 3, 2019.
  20. The Lebanese Recording Company/Philips 45 record (HE 428 302.2 E) placed the song next to the folksong "Til'it ya mahla nurha" (entitled "A Farmer's Song"), with the Rahbani brothers falsely credited with its composition. A repressing in 1960 (428.302 BE) contains the same errors. Most pressings, including the 1958 EP (HR-13.300) correctly named the Rahbani brothers as the arrangers of "Ya Luur."
  21. Conversation with the author, March 2021.
  22. See "Jbeineh" and "An al-umniyyat," on *Smoke of the Volcanoes* (Palestine: no label or catalog number, Reissue 1999 [1984], CD album).
  23. Sabreen performed live in Egypt in the mid-1990s and in 2002.
  24. Conversation with Abu Yazan, August 2013.
  25. Boulous, "Negotiating the Elements," 59.
  26. Meari, "*Sumud*," 551.
  27. Omar Eslam, "'Music Is a Blessing': Huda Asfour, Palestinian Scientist Who Writes Music for Social Change," *al-Ahram*, November 6, 2018, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/315575.aspx>.
  28. Conversation with Nizar Rohana. Khaled arranged Rohana's version of "Sama'i farahfaza" by Jamil al-Tanbouri, a piece he'd record separately on *buzuq*.



29. Shenker, *Egyptians*, 114.
30. Shenker, *Egyptians*, 114.
31. By 2001, for example, local production of Egyptian songs on cassette tape was less than half of that for non-Arab imports. See Said Sadek, "Cairo as Global/Regional Cultural Capital?," in *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*, ed. Diane Singerman and Paul Amar (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2006), 153–92.
32. Sadek argues that, "As Egypt no longer has a charismatic political leader like Nasser, a diva like Umm Kulthum or a superstar like Hafez, it has ceased to dominate the music world." Sadek, "Cairo as Global/Regional Cultural Capital?" 174.
33. Jessica Winegar, "Cultural Sovereignty in a Global Art Economy: Egyptian Cultural Policy and the New Western Interest in Art from the Middle East," *Cultural Anthropology* 21, no. 2 (2006): 173–204.
34. Jessica Winegar, *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 101–2.
35. Winegar, *Creative Reckonings*, 106.
36. Winegar, *Creative Reckonings*, 103.
37. Amro Ali, "Mo Salah, a Moral Somebody?" in Bayat and Herrera, *Global Middle East*, 92.
38. Samuli Schielke and Mukhtar Saad Shehata, *Shared Margins: An Ethnography with Writers in Alexandria after the Revolution* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 253.
39. Martin Stokes, "Sentimental Gesture and the Politics of 'Shape' in the Performances of Abd al-Halim Hafiz," in *Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections*, ed. Gianmario Borio, et al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 185–97.
40. Here, *salam* 'alaykum means "and that's it," or "period."
41. Jalal in Jalal and Boulos, "Musical Catastrophe," 46.
42. A long-necked Iranian string instrument.
43. I see similar principles in the approach of Palestinian-Egyptian poet Tamim al-Barghouti. Discussing his poem "They asked me do you love Egypt?," Barghouti complained that translating it into English would strip it of meaning: Kate Shannon Jenkins, "'Sometimes People Write Poetry with Their Feet': A Conversation with Tamim Al-Barghouti," *New Yorker*, September 22, 2017.
44. As Brennan points out, cultural Westernization accompanying Egyptian modernization processes pre-dated both Turkey or Iran; *Pieces of Mind*, 11.
45. Sawa el-Shawan, "The Socio-Political Context of Al-Musiqa Al-'Arabiyyah in Cairo, Egypt: Policies, Patronage, Institutions, and Musical Change (1927–1977)," *Asian Music* 12, no. 1 (1980): 86–128.
46. Anne Elise Thomas, "Intervention and Reform of Arab Music in 1932 and beyond" (paper presented at the Conference on Music in the World of Islam, Asilah, Morocco, August 8–13, 2007).

47. Darci Sprengel, "'More Powerful than Politics': Affective Magic in the DIY Musical Activism after Egypt's 2011 Revolution," *Popular Music* 38, no. 1 (2019): 54–72.
48. Thomas Burkhalter, "Multisited Avant-Gardes or World Music 2.0? Musicians from Beirut and beyond between Local Production and Euro-American Reception," in *The Arab Avant-Garde: Music, Politics, Modernity*, ed. Thomas Burkhalter, Kay Dickinson, and Benjamin J. Harbert (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 95.
49. Maysa Daw, for example, told me of her love of Amy Winehouse while musing that she may study Arab classical music in the future.
50. Silverstein, in Burkhalter, Dickinson, and Harbert, *Arab Avant-Garde*, 43.
51. See, for instance, Nicholas Gebhardt, *Going for Jazz: Musical Practices and American Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 81, on collective experimentation in the emergence of bebop; and Laudan Nooshin, "Jazz and its Social Meanings in Iran: From Cultural Colonialism to the Universal," in *Jazz Worlds/World Jazz*, ed. Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2016), 125–49.
52. John Fenn, "Kamyar Arsani and Huda Asfour Interview," Library of Congress, Washington, DC, September 20, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-8613>.
53. See, for example, Charlotte Silver, "Gaza Patients Stranded at Egypt's Border," *Electronic Intifada*, June 18, 2015, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/gaza-patients-stranded-egypts-border/14622>.
54. Abou-El-Fadl, "Road to Jerusalem," 8.
55. Winegar, *Creative Reckonings*, xvii.
56. Abou-El-Fadl, "Road to Jerusalem," 10–11.
57. Anonymous, "Observations on the Egyptian Independent Music Scene," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, no. 3 (2020): 540–44.
58. Sadek, "Cairo as Global/Regional Cultural Capital?" 158.
59. The introduction to one feature, for example, claims that "the regional scene itself . . . was barely existent back in 2007," "Tamer Abu Ghazaleh: Arab World's Alternative Music Tycoon," *Scene Noise*, November 20, 2014, <https://scenenoise.com/Features/tamer-abu-ghazaleh-arab-world-s-alternative-musi>.
60. The label has also been used, for example, to encompass orientalist depictions of Indian music in British pop; John Hutnyk, *Critique of Exotica: Music, Politics and the Culture Industry* (London: Pluto, 2000), 105–7.
61. Conversation with Hazem Shaheen, June 2022.
62. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Moscow: Progress, 1937).
63. During the Napoleonic war of 1798–1801, both Palestine and Egypt were invaded, though the Palestinian port town of Akka famously repulsed the invaders.
64. Summarized in Ó Ruairc, *Edward W. Said*, 92–95.
65. Edward W. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

66. Edward W. Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," *Social Text* 1 (Winter 1979): 7–58.
67. Feldman, "Home as a Refrain."
68. Lena Jayyusi, "The Time of Small Returns: Affect and Resistance during the Nakba," in Abdo and Masalha, *Oral History*, 104.
69. George Habash, "The Future of the Palestinian National Movement," interview, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 14, no. 4 (1984–85): 3–14.
70. Nadia R. Sirhan, *Folk Stories and Personal Narratives in Palestinian Spoken Arabic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 124, 136.
71. Ali Ahmad Allaham, "The Short Story as a Form of Resistance: A Study of the Short Stories of Ghassan Kanafani, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Alice Walker," PhD diss., Newcastle University, 2009, 68.
72. al-Nakib, "Kanafani in Kuwait," 96.
73. Saumya Deva, "Repetition = Resistance," *Journal of International Affairs* 72, no. 2 (2019): 125–32.
74. Racy notes, however, a narrowing in the variety of ornament types since the early twentieth century; *Making Music*, 86.
75. Danielson, *Voice of Egypt*, 146.
76. Sami Abu Shumays, "Expert Track," Maqam Analysis online (2013), <https://maqamlessons.com/analysis/experttrack.html>.
77. Said, *Power, Politics and Culture*, 335–36.
78. Said, "On Repetition," in *World, the Text and the Critic*, 117.
79. Said, "On Repetition," 119.
80. Said, "On Repetition," 123.
81. Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, 5.
82. Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 273–74.
83. Saed Muhssin, "The 'People's Artist' and the Beginnings of the Twentieth-Century Arab Avant-Garde," in Burkhalter et al., *Arab Avant-Garde*, 130.
84. Interview with Wissam Murad, August 2019.
85. Andreas Huyssen, "Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World," in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005), 15.
86. See also "Khabar ajel" (Urgent news) on *Thulth* (Egypt: Eka3, 2016; CD album).
87. "Sprinting Gazelle" on *Live at the Tabernacle* (UK: Fuse Records CFCD050, 2015; CD album).
88. Refqa Abu-Remaileh, "The Afterlives of *Iltizam*: Emile Habibi through a Kanafaniesque Lens of Resistance Literature," in *Commitment and beyond: Reflections on/of the Political in Arabic Literature since the 1940s*, ed. Friederik Pannewick and Georges Khalil (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2015), 171–84.
89. "The lorry traveled on over the burning earth, its engine roaring remorselessly." Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*, 51.

90. "Ghaba naharun akhar," sung by Siham Shammās on Fairuz, *al-Quds fil-bal*.
91. On *Death of the Prophet* (France: Akuphone AKULP1024, 2020; vinyl album reissue). Other musical examples include Mustafa al-Kurd's "Ya sahib al-tayr" (Oh birdman), *al-Madah*, 2009.
92. Lyrics supplied by Emile Ashrawi.
93. Edward W. Said, "On Repetition," in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 117.
94. Reem Abou-El Fadl, "Road to Jerusalem," 23.
95. These include the Arabesques festival in Montpellier, May 2017.
96. Jaime Jones, "Assembling the Underground: Scale, Value and Visibility in Dublin's DIY Music Scene," in *Made in Ireland: Studies in Popular Music*, ed. Áine Mangaoang, John O'Flynn, and Lonán Ó Briain (New York: Routledge, 2021), 173–84.
97. The two had also stood together against Israel's hosting of the Eurovision Song Contest in May 2019.
98. Fenn, "Kamyar Arsani and Huda Asfour Interview."
99. *Scene Noise*, "Tamer Abu Ghazaleh."
100. Edward W. Said, "Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler," *boundary 2* 21, no. 3 (1994), 12.
101. Shenker, *Egyptians*, 138.
102. Anonymous, "Observations."
103. That Palestinians have also been swept into Egyptian state repression is old news; communist Farid Haddad was killed in an Egyptian prison during the anticomunist repression of 1959 (Brennan, *Pieces of Mind*, 29).

## Chapter 5

1. Additional information in this section drawn from the oral histories of Fay-sal Abdul Aziz al-Biqā'i and Muhammad Said 'Ayyash, Palestine Remembered online archive, <https://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/al-Damun/index.html>. Accessed February 3, 2023.
2. Masalha, *Catastrophe Remembered: Palestine, Israel and the Internal Refugees* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 11.
3. Abu Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine*, 109.
4. A flat bread usually covered in za'tar and olive oil.
5. Ibrahim Nasrallah, *The Lanterns of the King of Galilee*, trans. Nancy Roberts (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2014), 187.
6. In the period since my fieldwork with Saied, he has in fact taken to singing himself, including versions of Palestinian folksongs, Sabreen covers, and his own Rahbani-esque satires like "The Good Citizen's Handbook."
7. Further distorted by the Israeli establishment of "facts on the ground" (colonial settlements), the Green Line separates the Zionist state from lands captured in 1967.

8. Adalah, *The Inequality Report: The Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel* (Haifa: Adalah Center, 2011), [https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/upfiles/2011/Adalah\\_The\\_Inequality\\_Report\\_March\\_2011.pdf](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/upfiles/2011/Adalah_The_Inequality_Report_March_2011.pdf).
9. Nihad Boqai, "Patterns of Internal Displacement, Social Adjustment and the Challenge of Return," in ed. Masalha, *Catastrophe Remembered*, 76.
10. Saleh Abdel Jawad, "Four Villages, Four Stories: Ethnic Cleansing Massacres in al-Jalil," in *Voices of the Nakba*, ed. Diana Allan (London: Pluto, 2021), 189.
11. Masalha, "In Suspension," 38.
12. Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians: A History of the Palestinians in Israel* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 25.
13. Hussein Abu Hussein and Fiona McKay, *Access Denied: Palestinian Land Rights in Israel* (New York: Zed Books, 2003).
14. Tewfik Ziad, "Four Poems," *Arab Palestinian Resistance* 3, no. 11 (1971): 24. An English translation of the poem was put to music by Zeinab Shaath in the late 1970s.
15. Shadi Khalilieh, Tal Ben Zvi, and Jafar Farah, eds., *Land Day: The History, Struggle and Monument* (Haifa: Mossawa Center, 2015), 84–85; also Nabih Bashir, "Land Day, 1976: A Turning Point in the Defense of Palestinian Lands in Israel," Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question, 2021, <https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/14509/land-day-1976>.
16. Bashir, "Land Day, 1976."
17. Masalha, *Catastrophe Remembered*, 273.
18. Joseph Massad, "Return or Permanent Exile?" in *The Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return*, ed. Naseer Aruri (London: Pluto, 2001), 106.
19. In June 2017, several ruling Likud party politicians faced criticism from activists and from liberal Zionist sections of the Israeli establishment by participating in the launch of a new book in Hebrew that called the Palestinian citizens of Israel "parasites" and "a fifth column," and argued for internment camps. At its launch, the text by Raphael Israeli, a professor emeritus at Hebrew University and a research fellow at the Truman Institute, was presented by serving transport minister Yisrael Katz as "very profound" and deserving of "serious discussion."
20. Kanaaneh, *Birthing the Nation*, 52.
21. Statistics on participation in the labor market among internally displaced Palestinians indicate similarities with blockaded Gaza and lower levels of activity than Palestinians in either prewar Syria or the West Bank: Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*, vol. 8, 2013–2015 (Bethlehem: Badil Resource Center, 2015), 46.
22. Rami Younis, "The Arab Youth Mainstreaming Arab Identity in Israel," *+972mag*, January 25, 2017, <https://www.972mag.com/watch-mainstreaming-palestinian-identity-in-israel/>.
23. Louis Brehony, "Rim Banna: A Symbol of Life and Unity," *Palestine Chronicle*, March 25, 2018, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/rim-banna-symbol-life-unity/>.

24. I see this labeling as formally linked to arguments for the much-vaunted “two-state solution,” critiqued in detail by Mazen Masri, “The Two-State Model and Israeli Constitutionalism: Impact on the Palestinian Citizens of Israel,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 44, no. 4 (2015) 7–20.
25. Kanaaneh, *Doctor in Galilee*, 137.
26. Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*, 225.
27. Alex Kane and Allison Deger, “Palestinian Youth Fulfill Their ‘Right of Return’ to the Destroyed Village of Iqrit,” *Mondoweiss*, April 23, 2014, <https://mondoweiss.net/2014/04/palestinian-destroyed-village/>.
28. Jenny Nyman, “Palestinians of Acre Face Growing Israeli Push to Evict Them,” *Middle East Eye*, December 12, 2016, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/features/palestinians-acre-face-growing-israeli-push-evict-them>.
29. Ramona Wadi, “In Joining the Coalition, Mansour Abbas Fragments the Palestinian Political Struggle,” *Palestine Chronicle*, June 20, 2021, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/in-joining-the-coalition-mansour-abbas-fragments-the-palestinian-political-struggle/>.
30. Tamir Sorek, “Cautious Commemoration: Localism, Communalism, and Nationalism in Palestinian Memorial Monuments in Israel,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 2 (2008): 337–68.
31. Tamir Sorek, “Disciplining Palestinian National Memory,” in *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory, and Power*, ed. Elia Zureik, David Lyon, and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (London: Routledge, 2011), 122.
32. Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*, 198.
33. The name of the settlement has been changed here at Saied’s request.
34. Benjamin Brinner, *Playing across a Divide: Israeli-Palestinian Musical Encounters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 309.
35. Benjamin Brinner, “Review: *Orientalism and Musical Mission: Palestine and the West*,” *Twentieth-Century Music* 11, no. 2 (2014): 301–7.
36. Brinner, *Playing across a Divide*, 309.
37. Interview with the author, August 2013.
38. Interview with the author, November 2014.
39. See “Suite Nomade 2” on the album *Nhaoul’* (France: Accords Croisés AC 147, 2012).
40. Interview with the author, March 2016.
41. Though the piano was played by ’48 Palestinians such as Haddad and Faraj Suleiman—and by Edward Said, who flirted with a career as a Western classical pianist—some musicians in Gaza report never having seen a piano in somebody’s home, but only on the premises of foreign NGOs.
42. Aryeh Tepper, “The Mood of the Oud,” *Jewish Ideas Daily*, December 10, 2010, <https://www.jewishideasdaily.com/776/features/the-mood-of-the-oud/>.
43. Jessica Steinberg, “It’s Hip to Be Pear when Playing the Oud,” *Times of Israel*, November 8, 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/its-hip-to-be-pear-when-playing-the-oud/>.

44. "Statement for a Boycott of the Zionist 'Oud Festival' in Occupied Jerusalem," *Masar Badil*, November 16, 2021, <https://masarbadil.org/en/2021/11/1767/>.
45. Anton Shammas, "Kitsch 22: On the Problems between Majority and Minority Cultures in Israel," *Tikkun Magazine*, September–October 1987.
46. John Bilezikjian, *Oud Method* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2006).
47. Conversation with the author.
48. Edward W. Said, *Music at the Limits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 307.
49. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 73.
50. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 74.
51. Gilroy, "Freedom Highway," W. E. B. Du Bois Lecture, Harvard University (October 2006), quoted in Thomas Caywood, "A Heady Look at Hendrix and Identity," *The Harvard Gazette*, October 12, 2006.
52. Paul Gilroy, *Darker than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 135.
53. Gilroy, *Darker than Blue*, 134.
54. Himmat Zubi, "The Ongoing Nakba," in *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba*, ed. Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha (London: Zed Books, 2018), 182–208.
55. Gilroy, "Freedom Highway."
56. Khaled, *My People Shall Live*, 29; emphasis added.
57. Ghassan Kanafani, "al-Tarkib al-tahti lil-thawra," in *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 467.
58. Issa Boulos, in Jalal and Boulos, "Musical Catastrophe," 48.
59. Sawa, *Music Performance Practice*, 105.
60. See "al-Fajr" (*Music of the Intifada*, 1989) and Sabreen, "Dance of the Resistance" on *Death of the Prophet* (France: Akuphone AKULP1024; 2020 [1987]; vinyl reissue).
61. Masalha discusses the early frontier state established in this period in relation to later nationalisms (*Palestine*, 236–40).
62. Nasrallah's transliteration.
63. Nasrallah, *Lanterns*, x.
64. Nasrallah, *Lanterns*, 276.
65. Silmi, "al-Nidal ma zal nidal al-ard."
66. Chuen-Fung Wong, "Conflicts, Occupation, and Music-Making in Palestine," *Macalester International* 23 (2009): 267–84.
67. Leo Brouwer, *La Musica, lo cubano y la innovación* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1982).
68. For an illustration of Cubanidad in action, see Helen Yaffe, *We Are Cuba: How a Revolutionary People Have Survived in a Post-Soviet World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 72.
69. Brouwer, *La Musica*, 25.
70. Constance McKenna, "Interview with Leo Brouwer," *Guitar Review* 75 (Fall 1988).
71. See, for example, "Tres piezas latinoamericanas" (1962) or "Paisaje Cubano Con Rumba" (1985).



72. Jodi Dean, *Comrade: An Essay on Political Belonging* (London: Verso, 2019), 3, 7.
77. This work is explored in more detail in chapter 7.
73. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 180.

## Chapter 6

1. Meari, "Sumud," 556; Sari Hanafi and Linda Tabar, "The Intifada and the Aid Industry: The Impact of the New Liberal Agenda on the Palestinian NGOs," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23, no. 1–2 (2003): 205–214; El-Ghadban and Strohm, "Ghosts of Resistance," 196.
2. "Samt min ajl Gaza," *Al Jazeera* online (January 1, 2009 <https://www.aljazeera.net/culture/2009/1/5/%D8%B5%D9%85%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%84-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%B4>).
3. *Sharar* (Spark) was also the title of a revolutionary album by El-Funoun.
4. Rashid Khalidi, "Collective Punishment in Gaza," *New Yorker*, July 29, 2014.
5. UN Country Team in the Occupied Territories, *Gaza Ten Years Later* (New York: Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, 2017).
6. The Israeli bombing of the Said al-Mashal theater on August 8, 2018, had many precedents. November 12, 2012, saw the bombardment of the Gaza city sports stadium, which killed four teenage footballers.
7. El Said, Meari, and Pratt, *Rethinking Gender*, 21.
8. Mathieu Rousselin, "In the Name of Allah and the Market: The Capitalist Leaning of Tunisian Islamists," *Science and Society* 80, no. 2 (2016): 196–220.
9. In "Assembling the Underground," Jones identifies underground scenes as "chosen" urban and cosmopolitan communities who rely on peripheral and reclaimed spaces, DIY practice, and shared musical aesthetics, and he sees the scene sustaining itself over time by emphasizing its network of personal relationships and a strong overlap of values and musical praxis.
10. Helen Kim, "'Keepin' It Real': Bombay Bronx, Cultural Producers and the Asian Scene," in *Migrating Music*, ed. Jason Toynbee and Byron Dueck (London: Routledge, 2011), 230.
11. Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees*, 48.
12. Ahmad Al Khatib described northern Jordan's Palestinian refugees as arriving en masse from northeast Palestine, maintaining many of their localized customs and inhabiting particular areas of the camps. Many Gaza-based Palestinians have origins north and east of the modern Gaza Strip.
13. Jalal and Boulos, "Musical Catastrophe," 38–40.
14. Sawa, *Music Performance Practice*, 194.
15. Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 5–6.
16. Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 13.
17. Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees*, 194.



18. Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 30.
19. Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 192.
20. Danielson, *Voice of Egypt*, 19.
21. In the *qasida* "Salu qalbi," Kulthum sings "Demands are not met by wishing; the world can only be taken by struggle."
22. Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees*, 193.
23. This English translation has been applied to theatrical works in the West Bank and by Palestine solidarity activists in Britain.
24. Various, *Music of the Intifada*.
25. In "Baladi ya baladi," Kofia band rework a known melody and lyrics into a message about the Palestinian right of return, on "Palestine My Land," (Sweden: no label, KOFIA-1, 1976; vinyl record).
26. Kanafani, *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 94–95.
27. The music of George Kirmiz, for example, was largely guitar- and keyboard-driven.
28. Aouragh, *Palestine Online*, 26.
29. These forms are sometimes referred to as genres in and of themselves, probably due to their traditional use as platforms for poetic creativity, although Boulos sees "musico-poetic frames" as a more appropriate term, with genres implying barriers or conventions; "Palestinian Music-Making Experience," 53.
30. Livia Alexander, "Is There a Palestinian Cinema? The National and Transnational in Palestinian Film Production," in *Palestin, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, ed. Rebecca Stein and Ted Swedenburg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 160.
31. Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs*, 101.
32. Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees*, 144–146.
33. In her description of Armenian lullabies, Melissa Bilal sees official celebrations of "national cultural heritage" as marking a departure from family settings and close autobiographical stories. "Most importantly, they are not transmitted through a bodily, intimate, and sensual relationship," but through "intellectual curiosity," "a gendered division," and, ultimately, a focus on commercially recorded "world music," where microtonal and other subtleties are lost; Melissa Bilal, "The Lost Lullaby and Other Stories of Being Armenian in Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 34 (Spring 2006): 77.
34. The 2020 arrest of DJ Sama', briefly discussed in chapter 4, was supposedly aimed at protecting the religious heritage of Nabi Musa, yet the PA had already planned to develop the site as a multimillion-euro hotel.
35. When appearing in Palestine, Simon Shaheen has performed original compositions and *tarab* repertoire alongside *turath*-based song forms such as "Dal'una."
36. See, for example, the works of Mustafa al-Kurd and Abu Arab.
37. Bessan Shehada, "Let's Talk about Gaza" (interview with Majeda al-Saqqa), *Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung*, June 26, 2016, <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id>

- /8250/lets-talk-about-gaza. Although Said Fadel's grandmother also played oud at home, Reem Anbar's emergence on the Gaza music scene does seem to be without recent precedent.
38. The notes of 'ajam are roughly equivalent to the Western major scale.
  39. Though she vocally supports more traditional oud styles, Reem also cites the *fazi'* (fantastic) Syrian player Nazih Borish as a favorite.
  40. Said Fadel is sometimes referred to by friends as al-Asmar (the black), a nickname he gave to himself out of pride for his dark skin.
  41. Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 29.
  42. Conversation with the author, January 2021.
  43. Beckles Willson, *Orientalism and Musical Mission*, 242.
  44. Feldman, "Home as a Refrain, 40"
  45. Laura Boushnak, *I Read I Write* (Limassol, Cyprus: Rimal, 2019), 131
  46. Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 26.
  47. During research among Gaza refugees, I heard five-year-old boys whose parents are not musicians casually singing Umm Kulthum choruses.
  48. Danielson, *Voice of Egypt*, 128.
  49. See Sirhan on connotations of this term in literature, where oral discourse has often been seen as the "poor relation" of written texts; *Folk Stories*, 18.
  50. Reem Anbar also attended.
  51. The al-Ashiqeen version references the rising of armed struggle (*nizilna mu-jahidin*). Lyrics in the study of Abdelhadi, *Li-Filastin nughanni*, Fateh Media (European Union: 2017), 224. <http://fatehmedia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%86%D8%BA%D9%86%D9%8A.pdf>.
  52. Dawaween sang four of six verses recorded by El-Funoun for the 2006 album *Zarif*, although the word *naqta'* is replaced by *na'bur*, both of which mean "to cross the river." The album notes translate the song name into English as "Dignity."
  53. Some versions replace the first word *hizz* (shake) with *ghazz* (pierced), or *daqq* (knocked).
  54. A theme of Palestinian literature has painted the homeland as a sacred body, defining visions of heritage through Islamic mythologizing of this period. This writing reaches farcical conclusions in the comparisons of Yasser Arafat to Salah al-Din by Fatah loyalists: Brigadier General Shahedul Anam Khan, "Yasser Arafat: Modern Era's Saladin," *Lebanon Daily Star*, November 11, 2020, <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/strategically-speaking/news/yasser-arafat-modern-eras-saladin-1992717>.
  55. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 102.
  56. Though the 1939 White Paper is viewed ambivalently for its supposed limits on Zionist colonization (spurring paramilitaries to rebel against their British backers), the ground had nevertheless been laid for 1948 with Britain's violent repression of the Arab Revolt of 1936–39. See David Cronin, *Balfour's*

- Shadow: A Century of British Support for Zionism and Israel* (London: Pluto, 2017), 38–78.
57. Kofia, “Earth of My Homeland” (1979); Sabreen, “Smoke of the Volcanoes” (1984).
  58. The song has origins in the Palestinian Revolution of the 1960s, with lyrics and music credited to Salah al-Din al-Husseini and Mahdi Sardana.
  59. al-Ali, *Child in Palestine*, 115. Continuing to symbolize *sumud* defiance to Zionism and regional reaction, the Mother Palestine of Arab-Brazilian artist Carlos Latuff has faced censorship from the PA, marking an evolving narrative of womanhood in the context of national struggle and crisis.
  60. al-Ali, *Karikatur*, 18.
  61. Kanaaneh, *Birthing the Nation*, 22.
  62. *Music of the Intifada* liner notes.
  63. Meari, “*Sumud*.”
  64. Diaa Hadid and Majd Al Waheidi, “With Hamas Watching, Singer Creates a (Modest) Sensation,” *New York Times*, March 13, 2016.
  65. Among other public concerts, Sabrin Shaath sang at the Ayam al-Masrah theater in 2014. Other female singers to perform live in Gaza during this period included ‘Azza Nahhal and Rima Mahdi.
  66. Jason Greenblatt, “Care about Gaza? Blame Hamas,” *New York Times*, April 22, 2019.
  67. Sawa, *Music Performance Practice*, 174.
  68. Interview with the author.
  69. Honorific title for *tarab* vocalists. Sabah Fakhri and Wadi’ al-Safi are noted for their facial expressions: Sawa, *Music Performance Practice*, 174.
  70. Hadid and Al Waheidi, “With Hamas Watching.”
  71. Sabah al-Kuffieh (Digital TV channel) broadcast, October 30, 2022.
  72. Jones, “Assembling the Underground.” See also Louis Brehony, “‘Fire! Fire!’: A Guide to the Music of Palestinian-Swedish Band Kofia,” *Palestine Chronicle*, March 9, 2020, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/fire-fire-a-guide-to-the-music-of-palestinian-swedish-band-kofia/>.
  73. At the time of writing, none of the group has been able to secure a source of income in Turkey amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
  74. Bandar Khalil, “Shu ‘amlat al-rozana,” *al-Watan*, November 8, 2011.
  75. Its name comes from the Persian *chehargah*, a *dastgah* scale still in use in Iran.
  76. Racy’s reading of al-Sabbagh suggests *jiharkah* on F as containing an A natural, which can be altered to produce *tarab* states in listeners (*Making Music in the Arab World*, 110).
  77. Though Farraj and Abu Shumays point out that ‘*ajam* is not traditionally an equal-tempered *maqam*, their categorization of its playability on Western instruments hints at a process whereby historic voicings of ‘*ajam* and other *maqamat* have been flattened out or standardized. Johnny Farraj and Sami Abu Shumays, *Inside Arabic Music: Arabic Maqam Performance and Theory in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 214

78. Boulos, "Palestinian Music-Making Experience," 51–53.
79. Mu'tasim Adileh. "Arabic Music between the Hammer of Technological Creativity and the Anvil of Cultural Identity," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 42, no. 1 (June 2011): 149.
80. Khyam Allami, "Microtonality and the Struggle for Fretlessness in the Digital Age," *CTM Festival* (2019), <https://www.ctm-festival.de/magazine/microtonality-and-the-struggle-for-fretlessness-in-the-digital-age#96>.
81. Quoted in Adileh, Op. cit., 151.
82. Translation Michael R. Burch.
83. Correspondence with the author.
84. Masalha, *Palestine*, 40–41.
85. See Boulos, "Palestinian Music-Making Experience," 237, on Muhammad Hasib al-Qadi, exiled from Yafa.
86. Baroud, *Last Earth*, 74.
87. Sirhan, *Folk Stories*, 88.
88. Edward Said, BBC *Hard Talk*, December 11, 2001.
89. Issa Boulos suggested that recent proliferation of musicians in Gaza was "like Jerusalem" at the time of Sabreen. Conversation with the author, May 2020.
90. Rachel Beckles Willson, "Palestinian Song, European Revelation, and Mission," in Kanaaneh et al., *Palestinian Music and Song*, 20.
91. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, vol. 1 of *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress, 1969).
92. Sabbagh, *Palestinian Women*, 39–40.
93. Boushnak, *I Read I Write*, 130.
94. Khaled Abu Toameh, "Palestinians: The Dangers of Singing," *Gatestone Institute*, February 11, 2020, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/15555/palestinians-danger-singing>.
95. Abu Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*, 158.
96. Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian Refugee Women's Stories of Home and Homelessness: Towards a New Research Agenda," *Review of Women's Studies* [Birzeit University] 4 (2007): 9–26.
97. Hamdi, "Khas bi-l-suwar: hakadha zaharat sahibat ughniyyat 'Habib qalbi' ba'd al-i'tizal," *al-Bawabh News*, December 13, 2018.
98. El Said, Meari, and Pratt, *Rethinking Gender*, 1.
99. Filipa Pestana, " Hamas and the Women's Movement: Islamism and Feminism under Occupation," *E-International Relations*, January 12, 2016, <https://www.e-ir.info/2016/01/12/hamas-and-the-womens-movement-islamism-and-feminism-under-occupation/>.
100. Islah Jad, *The Demobilization of Women's Movements: The Case of Palestine* (Mexico: AWID, 2008).
101. Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide* (London: Pluto, 2006), 124.
102. Interview with the author, December 2020.
103. Muaddi Darraj, "Palestinian Women."

104. Reem Anbar, "'Said Al-Mashal' Cultural Center: War against Politics, Civilization and Art," *Palestine Chronicle*, August 13, 2018, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/said-al-mashal-cultural-center-war-against-politics-civilization-and-art/>.
105. The word used for "exiles" is *manfiyin*, the name of a Lebanon-based band in chapter 2.
106. Sayigh, *Palestinians*; Baroud, *Last Earth*.
107. Interview with the author, December 2020.
108. Massalha, "In Suspension," 212–15.

## Chapter 7

1. A medley-like form from Aleppo popularized by Fakhri.
2. The final line "hiyya di hiyya al-asliya" roughly translates as "this is where it comes from." Here the poet could mean profit, money, or human life in a more general sense.
3. Despite President Erdoğan's rhetoric, Israel was Turkey's fifth highest destination for exports in 2019, according to the European Commission. Signaling an end to previous statements of solidarity with Palestinians, he announced a "turning point" in relations during the visit to Ankara by his Israeli counterpart Isaac Herzog in March 2022.
4. Lefebvre's concept is defined as the right to "full and complete usage" of urban moments and places in the process of encounter and exchange. Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. and ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 195.
5. Turkey did not form a major destination of Palestinian exile after 1948 or 1967, but there are historic ties. Palestine formed part of the Ottoman Empire for four centuries until its 1917 collapse.
6. Dean, *Comrade*.
7. Dean, *Comrade*, 63.
8. "Al-Thaqafa wa-l-muqawama," Samidoun online seminar, February 8, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJmVRZLtWpk>.
9. Che Guevara, *Episodes of the Revolutionary War*, in *Che Guevara Reader: Writings on Politics & Revolution*, 6.
10. This is the official translation given on Egyptian releases. The title could also be translated as "I exist," "I'm present," or "I'm still here."
11. Most (but not all) of the musicians in their circle are young men, *shabab*. Though *sabaya* is used to describe young women, *shabab* is often used also for mixed groups.
12. Lena Chamamyan, "Yakhi ana suriya" (Brother, I'm Syrian).
13. Rapper Majd Antar reports that "there's not much here for foreign musicians in general. You get a few requests in comparison to Turkish musicians—there are not many Arab places to play." Conversation with the author. April 2020.

14. Jonathan Holt Shannon, "From Silence to Song: Affective Horizons and Nostalgic Dwelling among Syrian Musicians in Istanbul," special issue, *Rast Musicology Journal* 7, no. 2 (2019): 2050–64.
15. Kerem Öktem, "Erasing Palimpsest City: Boom, Bust, and Urbicide in Turkey," in Yacobi and Nasasra, *Routledge Handbook on Middle East Cities*, 304.
16. This includes the forced eviction and collective dispersal of thousands of Roma residents of the central Istanbul district of Sulukule and the 2007 emptying of Kurdish-majority Ayazma under a "modernizing" project, in which residents were labeled as terrorists by authorities. Relocation to dilapidated housing blocks, away from existing jobs and support nets, into ghettoized regions, deepens the social deprivation suffered already by minorities in Turkey. See Tansel Korkmaz and Eda Ünlü-Yücesoy, eds., *Istanbul: Living in Voluntary and Involuntary Exclusion* (Rotterdam: IABR, 2008), [https://periferiesurbanes.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/istanbul\\_living-in-voluntary-and-involuntary-exclusion.pdf](https://periferiesurbanes.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/istanbul_living-in-voluntary-and-involuntary-exclusion.pdf).
17. Migrants are frequently dispersed across cities, regions, borders, or, like the Syrian "rebels," they are recruited as loyal militants. At the time of writing, Turkey has active military interventions in Iraq, Syria, and Libya. In Syria, Turkey aims to both crush Kurdish resistance and to support regime change in Damascus. See Birol Baskan, "Turkey's Pan-Islamist Foreign Policy," *Cairo Review*, Spring 2019, <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/turkeys-pan-islamist-foreign-policy/>.
18. Oktem, "Erasing Palimpsest City."
19. Massalha, "In Suspension," 117.
20. Recent Palestinian versions include those by Wissam Murad and Nai Barghouti. The song was also played by Sheikh Imam and Ziad Rahbani, among others.
21. Hussein A. H. Omar, "The Arab Spring of 1919," *London Review of Books* blog, April 4, 2019.
22. Ashraf Gharib, "Remembering Musical Pioneer Sayed Darwish," *al-Ahram*, September 20, 2019, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsPrint/351197.aspx>.
23. Conversation with the author, February 8, 2020.
24. Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs*, 101.
25. Umm Kulthum also reportedly thought of Cairo as a place of exile from the country. See Danielson, *Voice of Egypt*, 188. Conversely, Said felt "insulated from the fellahin" in well-to-do Zamalek, according to Brennan, *Pieces of Mind*, 6.
26. Swedenburg, "Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier," 18–30.
27. Dean, *Comrade*, 63.
28. Dean, *Comrade*, 3.
29. Dean, *Comrade*, 36.
30. Dean, *Comrade*, 74.
31. Beyond Palestine, the political novel *Rifqat al-silah* (Comrades in Arms) by Moroccan Mubarak Rabi' is set in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.
32. In Mona Mikhail, "Iltizam: Commitment and Arabic Poetry," *World Literature Today* 53, no. 4 (1979): 595–600.

33. Mikhail, "Iltizam," 595.
34. Leila Khaled also reports eating her mother's *maqluba* before taking part in the 1969 operation to hijack a plane from Rome (*My People Shall Live*, 57).
35. Related by George Hajjar, in Nancy Coffin, "Engendering Resistance in the Work of Ghassan Kanafani: *All That's Left to You, Of Men and Guns*, and *Umm Sa'd*," *Arab Studies Journal* 4, no. 2 (1996): 98–118.
36. Various, *Music of the Intifada* (UK: Venture VE29, 1989; vinyl record).
37. "Paintbrush, pen, gun—they are all tools of self-defense"; Coffin, "Engendering Resistance," 98.
38. Membership of political parties involved in struggle is often verbalized as "support," though it should be noted that, in Turkey in particular, there are security and other implications for those professing either member or supporter status of a large number of leftist and minority-nationalist groups, notably the Kurds.
39. During his role as PFLP spokesman in Beirut (around 1971–72), Kanafani appeared regularly in front of images of Guevara, Lenin, Mao, and Ho, as well as PFLP posters, some of which featured his own drawings.
40. Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi, dir., *Inventos, USA: Clenched Fist Productions*, 2005; DVD film.
41. Mostly recognized as a Fairuz song from her 1957 recording in a Rahbani brothers' arrangement, the melody is also an Aleppan *qud* (pl. *qudud*), "al-'Uzubiya," sung by Sabah Fakhri and played instrumentally by musicians including Syrian *oud* player Omar Naqshabandi.
42. Sayigh, *Palestinians*, 147.
43. This concept is seen by Dean as accompanying internationalism in communist movements (*Comrade*, 71).
44. Steve Salaita, "Palestine in the Revolutionary Imagination," author website, April 3, 2019, <https://stevesalaita.com/palestine-in-the-revolutionary-imagination/>.
45. Edward W. Said and David Barsamian, *Culture and Resistance* (London: Pluto, 2003), 59.
46. Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 125.
47. Meari, "Sumud."
48. Dean, *Comrade*, 84–85.
49. The song was performed by Ziad al-Rahbani and Egyptian *oud* player Hazem Shaheen at the party's 2014 congress.

## Conclusion

1. Conversation with the author, July 2021; Masalha, *Palestine*.
2. Of 13,500 inhabiting the city in 1953, 8,500 were refugees (Shehadeh, *Going Home*, 80).
3. Album notes, *Tamaas* (France: daqui 332015, 2003; CD album).

4. Shehadeh, *Going Home*, 84.
5. Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees*, 11.
6. Boulos, "Palestinian Music-Making Experience," 50.
7. Louis Brehony, "'Baladi Iran': Playing Palestinian Music in Revolutionary Tehran," *Middle East Monitor*, January 31, 2020, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200131-baladi-iran-playing-palestinian-music-in-revolutionary-tehran/>.
8. Examples could include the saxophone in the musical language of black jazz or the elevation of indigenous instruments in Latin American popular song.
9. Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 7.
10. See the testimonies of Husayn Lubani and Fatima 'Abdallah in Ted Swedenburg, "Songs of Resistance," in *Voices of the Nakba: A Living History of Palestine*, ed. Diana Allan (London: Pluto, 2021), 161.
11. Addameer campaign, September 2021.
12. Wisam Rafeedie, "Ashira firqat al-funun," *al-Hadath* report, August 9, 2021.
13. On August 8, 2021, a Saudi court convicted and sentenced sixty-nine Palestinian and Jordanian political prisoners for their activism in solidarity with Palestine. One musician in this book reported that a family member had been tortured and executed in Saudi Arabia in recent years.
14. Laudan Nooshin, ed., *Music and the Play of Power in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 6.
15. Jamal Hawail, "Interrogation in Israeli Prisons: The Cacophony of Loud Music and Sounds of Torture," *Palestine Studies* online, July 8, 2021, <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1651423>.
16. Khalili, *Time in the Shadows*, 128. Addameer association, *Story Based Torture*, January 2020. [https://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/story\\_based\\_torture\\_final.pdf](https://www.addameer.org/sites/default/files/publications/story_based_torture_final.pdf).
17. Steven M. Friedson, "The Music Box: Songs of Futility in a Time of Torture," *Ethnomusicology* 63, no. 2 (2019): 222–46.
18. Khalili, *Time in the Shadows*, 162.
19. Meari, "Sumud."
20. Louis Brehony, "Genius in the People: Collective Musical Instrument Making in the Jails of the Colonizer," *Janus Unbound: Journal of Critical Studies* 1, no. 2 (July 2022), 36.
21. al-Sha'ir, "'An sina'at al-'ud dakhil al-zinzana," Institute for Palestine Studies, July 15, 2020. <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1650346>.
22. Interview with the author, August 2021.
23. Without charge or trial, Asim was rearrested on August 24, 2022, and sentenced to a further six months of "administrative detention."
24. Karkabi points out that the turn to synthesized sound in wedding music from the 1980s "was a matter of financial convenience." See "Electro-Dabke," 173.
25. Said, *End of the Peace Process*, 117.
26. Mimi Cabell, Samir Harb, and Nicola Perugini, *Morbid Symptoms: Interregnum and Loops of Authority in the Muqata'as* (Ramallah: Sharjah Biennial 13, 2017), 2.



27. Yara Hawari, "Erasing Memories of Palestine in Settler-Colonial Urban Space," in Yacobi and Nasasra, *Routledge Handbook on Middle East Cities*, 115.
28. The British-French carving up of the map included vast swathes of modern Turkey, extending southward from Kuwait into what is now Saudi Arabia.
29. Kanafani, "Al-Muqawama hiya al-asl," *al-Dirasat al-Siyasiya*, 481–84.
30. Lena Meari, "Reading Che in Colonized Palestine," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 50, no. 1 (2018): 49–55.
31. Kanafani, "Thoughts on Change," 157.

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